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Electoral Governance in Africa at a Turning Point: Challenges, Reforms, and Democratic Outcomes in Cameroon and Ghana

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Abstract

This article examines electoral governance in Africa through a comparative analysis of Cameroon and Ghana, with a particular focus on the challenges, reform trajectories, and democratic outcomes associated with electoral processes. Grounded in the normative framework of international and regional human rights law, the study interrogates the extent to which electoral systems in both countries comply with standards set out in instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Adopting a qualitative, doctrinal, and comparative research methodology, the study analyzes constitutional provisions, electoral laws, institutional practices, and scholarly literature to assess the effectiveness of electoral governance frameworks. The analysis is further informed by Rule of Law Theory and Utilitarian Theory, which together provide a dual lens for evaluating both the legality and societal impact of electoral processes. The findings reveal significant disparities between the two countries. Ghana demonstrates relatively stronger electoral governance, characterized by institutional independence, credible reforms, and peaceful transfers of power, thereby contributing to democratic consolidation. In contrast, Cameroon's electoral system is constrained by limited institutional autonomy, electoral irregularities, and weak implementation of reforms, resulting in diminished public trust and contested democratic outcomes. The study further finds that while both states have ratified key international and regional instruments, compliance remains uneven, particularly in terms of practical enforcement. The article concludes that effective electoral governance requires more than formal legal frameworks; it demands genuine institutional independence, political will, and alignment with human rights standards. It recommends comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening electoral institutions, enhancing transparency, and promoting inclusive political participation. The study contributes to scholarship by integrating legal-normative and outcome-based analyses to provide a more holistic understanding of electoral governance and democratic legitimacy in Africa.

Keywords: Cameroon and Ghana, democratic outcomes, electoral challenges, electoral governance, electoral reforms, and turning point

1. Introduction

The conduct of elections is not merely a political exercise but a legal process deeply embedded in international human rights law. Central to modern democratic theory is the principle that electoral governance must safeguard the effective realization of political rights, particularly the right to participate in public affairs, to vote, and to be elected. These rights are expressly guaranteed under Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), and Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.¹

¹ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. (1981). Article 13. Organization of African Unity.

Collectively, these instruments impose binding and persuasive obligations on states to ensure that elections are free, fair, transparent, and genuinely reflective of the will of the people. Notwithstanding this normative framework, a persistent disjunction exists between international legal standards and electoral practice in several African states. Although most states formally guarantee political participation, the practical realization of these rights is frequently constrained by institutional fragility, politicized electoral management bodies, limited accountability mechanisms, and episodic electoral violence. The UN Human Rights Committee has clarified that Article 25 of the ICCPR requires not only formal recognition of political rights but also their effective enjoyment through impartial administration and genuine electoral competition.¹ Yet, in many African jurisdictions, electoral governance structures fall short of these minimum standards, thereby undermining both democratic legitimacy and human rights compliance.²

Within this broader context, electoral governance in Africa reveals divergent trajectories, particularly when comparing Ghana and Cameroon. Ghana has developed a relatively resilient system characterized by institutional continuity, electoral multiparty elections, and repeated peaceful transfers of power.

Although not without challenges relating to perceptions of electoral management neutrality and administrative constraints, Ghana's electoral framework has progressively strengthened adherence to constitutional and international standards of political participation.³ By contrast, Cameroon exemplifies a more constrained model of electoral governance, where formal constitutional guarantees coexist with persistent concerns regarding institutional independence, electoral transparency, and political competitiveness. Since the reintroduction of multiparty politics, electoral processes have frequently been marked by allegations of irregularities, opposition marginalization, and declining public trust in electoral institutions. These conditions raise significant questions regarding Cameroon's compliance with its obligations under Article 25 of the ICCPR and Article 13 of the ACHPR, particularly the requirement of genuine and equal political participation.⁴

Against this backdrop, this article undertakes a comparative legal analysis of electoral governance in Ghana and Cameroon within the normative framework of international human rights law. It interrogates the extent to which electoral institutions and practices in both states align with binding and interpretive standards governing political participation. The central argument advanced is that while electoral reforms are a necessary condition for democratic consolidation, they are insufficient in the absence of robust institutional independence, credible electoral administration, and genuine political competition.

By juxtaposing Ghana's relatively progressive electoral trajectory with Cameroon's more contested experience, the study contributes to broader debates on democratization, constitutional governance, and human rights compliance in Africa. It further demonstrates that electoral governance must be understood not only as a political mechanism but as a legally regulated human rights process, the integrity of which is fundamental to the legitimacy of democratic order.

2. Conceptual Clarification

For purposes of conceptual precision and doctrinal clarity, this study draws on definitions from multiple authoritative dictionaries commonly used in legal and academic research, including *Black's Law Dictionary*, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the *Cambridge Dictionary*, and the *Collins English Dictionary*. These sources are relied upon for their consistency in legal, linguistic, and research-oriented definitions.

2.1 Electoral Governance

The concept of electoral governance is not directly defined in standard dictionaries; however, its components are well captured. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "governance" as the act or manner of governing, while *Black's Law Dictionary* describes it as the exercise of authority and control over public administration and legal systems.⁵ Similarly, *Cambridge Dictionary* defines governance as the way in which organizations or countries are managed at the highest level.⁶

Drawing from these meanings, electoral governance refers to the legal and institutional framework through

¹ UN Human Rights Committee. (1996). *General Comment No. 25: Article 25 (Participation in public affairs and the right to vote)*. United Nations.

² Norris, P. (2014). *Why electoral integrity matters*. Cambridge University Press.

³ Debrah, E. (2016). The Electoral Commission of Ghana and the administration of elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 15(2), 25–45.

⁴ Fombad, C. M. (2012). Cameroon's emergency powers: A recipe for (un)constitutional dictatorship? *Journal of African Law*, 56(1), 62–81.

⁵ *Black's Law Dictionary* (11th ed.). (2019). Thomson Reuters.

⁶ *Cambridge Dictionary*. (2020). Cambridge University Press.

which electoral processes are organized, regulated, and administered, including rule-making, implementation, and adjudication.

2.2 Electoral Challenges

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a “challenge” as a difficult task or problem that requires effort to deal with, while the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes it as a call to dispute or contest.¹ *Black’s Law Dictionary* further situates it in legal context as an objection or formal contestation of a process or decision.

Accordingly, electoral challenges refer to the institutional, legal, and political obstacles that hinder the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections, including malpractice, weak institutions, and political interference.

2.3 Electoral Reforms

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines “reform” as to improve a system by changing it, while *Collins English Dictionary* describes it as to make changes in something in order to improve it.²

Black’s Law Dictionary adds a legal dimension by defining reform as the correction or amendment of defective laws or systems. Thus, electoral reforms refer to intentional legal, institutional, and administrative changes designed to improve the transparency, credibility, and effectiveness of electoral systems.

2.4 Democratic Outcomes

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “democracy” as government by the people, while *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes it as a system in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through representatives.³ The term “outcome” is defined as a final result or consequence.⁴

Therefore, democratic outcomes refer to the results and consequences of electoral processes, including legitimacy of leadership, political stability, citizen trust, and representation of the popular will.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, doctrinal, and comparative research design to examine electoral governance in Africa, with particular focus on Cameroon and Ghana. The methodological approach is grounded in legal analysis and comparative inquiry, enabling a systematic evaluation of the relationship between electoral governance frameworks and democratic outcomes within the broader context of international human rights law.

3.1 Research Design

The research is primarily doctrinal in nature, involving the critical examination of legal texts, institutional frameworks, and normative standards governing electoral processes. Doctrinal legal research facilitates the interpretation, synthesis, and critical evaluation of legal principles derived from statutes, case law, and international instruments.⁵ This approach is particularly appropriate for assessing compliance with established human rights norms and constitutional provisions regulating elections.

In addition, the study employs a comparative analytical approach, which enables the systematic comparison of electoral governance systems in Cameroon and Ghana. Comparative legal methodology is essential in identifying patterns, divergences, and causal explanations across jurisdictions, particularly in studies involving institutional performance and democratic outcomes.⁶ This approach enhances the explanatory depth of the study by situating national experiences within broader theoretical and normative frameworks.

3.2 Sources of Data

The study relies on secondary data, derived from authoritative legal and scholarly sources. These include:

- Primary legal materials, such as national constitutions, electoral laws, and relevant international and regional human rights instruments, including the UDHR, ICCPR, and ACHPR;
- Judicial decisions and official reports, particularly those addressing electoral disputes, institutional reforms, and governance practices;

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2020). Merriam-Webster Inc.

² Collins English Dictionary. (2020). HarperCollins Publishers.

³ Oxford English Dictionary (online ed.). (2020). Oxford University Press. Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hutchinson, T., & Duncan, N. (2012). Defining and describing what we do: Doctrinal legal research. *Deakin Law Review*, 17(1), 83–119.

⁶ Siems, M. (2018). *Comparative law* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

- Secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, policy reports, and publications from international organizations and electoral observation bodies.

The use of diverse and credible sources ensures both doctrinal rigor and contextual richness in analyzing electoral governance systems.¹

3.3 Method of Analysis

The study employs qualitative content analysis and comparative legal reasoning to analyze the data. Legal texts and institutional practices are systematically examined to assess their conformity with international human rights standards, particularly those governing political participation and electoral integrity. Content analysis allows for the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and gaps within legal and institutional frameworks.²

The comparative method facilitates a structured evaluation of similarities and differences between Cameroon and Ghana, enabling the study to move beyond descriptive accounts toward explanatory analysis of divergent democratic outcomes.³ Furthermore, the analysis is guided by the theoretical frameworks of Rule of Law Theory and Utilitarian Theory. While the rule of law perspective evaluates adherence to legality, transparency, and institutional independence, the utilitarian approach assesses the broader societal consequences of electoral governance, including political stability, public trust, and democratic legitimacy.⁴

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical perspectives: Rule of Law Theory and Utilitarian Theory. These frameworks provide a normative and analytical basis for examining electoral governance and its implications for democratic outcomes in Cameroon and Ghana.

4.1 Rule of Law Theory

Rule of Law Theory constitutes a foundational principle in constitutionalism and democratic governance, emphasizing that all persons and institutions, including the state, are subject to and accountable under the law. At its core, the rule of law requires legality, equality before the law, legal certainty, and the protection of fundamental rights.⁵ In the context of electoral governance, the rule of law mandates that electoral processes be conducted in accordance with established legal frameworks that are transparent, predictable, and impartially enforced.

From a human rights perspective, the rule of law is intrinsically linked to the protection of political participation rights as enshrined in international legal instruments such as the ICCPR and the African Charter. The effective realization of these rights depends on the existence of independent electoral management bodies, impartial dispute resolution mechanisms, and adherence to constitutional provisions governing elections. Where electoral institutions are subject to political interference or fail to operate within the confines of the law, the legitimacy of electoral outcomes is fundamentally undermined.

In comparative terms, Rule of Law Theory provides a critical lens through which to assess the divergence between Ghana and Cameroon. Ghana's relatively stable electoral system reflects a stronger institutional commitment to legal accountability and procedural compliance, whereas Cameroon's electoral governance challenges-particularly concerns regarding institutional independence and enforcement-suggest a deficit in the operationalization of rule of law principles. Thus, this theory enables an evaluation of how adherence to legal norms shapes electoral credibility and democratic legitimacy.

4.2 Utilitarian Theory

Utilitarian Theory, most prominently associated with thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, is premised on the principle that actions and institutions should be evaluated based on their capacity to produce the greatest good for the greatest number.⁶ Within the context of governance, utilitarianism emphasizes outcomes, efficiency, and the overall welfare implications of political and legal arrangements.

Applied to electoral governance, Utilitarian Theory shifts analytical focus from formal legal compliance to the substantive consequences of electoral systems. It interrogates whether electoral processes, regardless of their formal structure, effectively promote political stability, public trust, social cohesion, and inclusive participation.

¹ Epstein, L., & King, G. (2002). The rules of inference. *University of Chicago Law Review*, 69(1), 1–133.

² Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. Sage Publications.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Fuller, L. L. (1969). *The morality of law*. Yale University Press.

⁵ Dicey, A. V. (1885). *Introduction to the study of the law of the constitution*. Macmillan.

⁶ Bentham, J. (1789). *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*. Oxford University Press.

An electoral system that formally complies with legal standards but produces widespread dissatisfaction, exclusion, or instability may be considered deficient from a utilitarian standpoint.

In the African context, this perspective is particularly relevant in assessing the practical impact of electoral reforms. Ghana's electoral system, for instance, may be viewed as comparatively successful not only because of its adherence to legal norms but also due to its capacity to foster peaceful transitions of power and broader societal acceptance of electoral outcomes. Conversely, Cameroon's electoral challenges may be understood as producing suboptimal societal outcomes, including diminished public trust, political disengagement, and periodic tensions.

While Rule of Law Theory emphasizes procedural integrity and legal compliance, Utilitarian Theory foregrounds the consequences and societal impact of electoral governance. The integration of these two frameworks allows for a more comprehensive analysis of electoral systems, bridging the gap between normative legal standards and practical democratic outcomes. In this study, the rule of law provides the benchmark for assessing institutional legitimacy and compliance with human rights obligations, while utilitarianism evaluates the extent to which electoral governance contributes to broader democratic stability and public welfare.

By combining these perspectives, the study advances a dual analytical approach that not only interrogates whether electoral processes are conducted in accordance with established legal norms but also whether they produce outcomes that enhance democratic legitimacy and societal well-being in Cameroon and Ghana.

5. Legal Framework for Electoral Governance in Cameroon and Ghana

Electoral governance in Cameroon and Ghana is anchored in a multi-layered legal framework comprising international human rights instruments, regional norms, and domestic constitutional and statutory provisions. This framework establishes the legal standards governing political participation, electoral administration, and democratic accountability. Both Cameroon and Ghana are parties to several of these instruments and are therefore legally bound to uphold the principles of free, fair, and credible elections. However, the effectiveness of these legal regimes depends not only on their formal ratification but also on their implementation and enforcement.¹

6. International Legal Framework

At the global level, electoral governance is primarily governed by international human rights law, which recognizes political participation as a fundamental right. Both Cameroon and Ghana have ratified key international instruments and are therefore bound by their provisions.

6.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides that everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. It further establishes that the will of the people shall be expressed through periodic and genuine elections conducted by universal and equal suffrage and held by secret ballot. Although the UDHR is not a binding treaty, it has attained the status of customary international law and serves as a foundational normative framework guiding democratic governance.² Both Cameroon and Ghana, as member states of the United Nations, are expected to uphold its principles.

6.2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides a binding legal framework for electoral governance. Article 25 guarantees the right of every citizen to vote and to be elected in genuine periodic elections conducted by universal suffrage and secret ballot. Both Cameroon and Ghana have ratified the ICCPR, thereby undertaking binding obligations to ensure these rights are effectively realized. The UN Human Rights Committee, in General Comment No. 25 (1996), emphasizes that states must guarantee not only formal rights but also practical conditions for their exercise, including impartial electoral administration and equal political participation.³

6.3 Other Relevant International Standards

Both Cameroon and Ghana are also parties to other international instruments reinforcing non-discrimination in political participation. These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These treaties impose binding obligations on states to eliminate discriminatory barriers to political

¹ Norris, P. (2014). *Why electoral integrity matters*. Cambridge University Press.

² Shaw, M. N. (2017). *International law* (8th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

³ UN Human Rights Committee. (1996). *General Comment No. 25: Article 25 (Participation in public affairs and the right to vote)*. UN Women. (2014). *Women's participation in political processes*.

participation and promote inclusivity in governance.¹

7. Regional Legal Framework

At the regional level, Cameroon and Ghana are bound by African human rights and governance instruments that reinforce democratic norms and electoral standards.

7.1 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)

Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) guarantees every citizen the right to participate freely in the government of their country. Both Cameroon and Ghana have ratified the African Charter, thereby assuming binding obligations to ensure political participation in accordance with democratic principles. The African Commission has further interpreted this provision to require credible elections and equal access to political processes.²

7.2 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007)

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) provides a comprehensive legal framework for electoral governance in Africa. Both Cameroon and Ghana have ratified the ACDEG, committing themselves to principles such as the establishment of independent electoral bodies, transparency in electoral processes, and democratic accountability. The Charter represents a significant evolution in regional efforts to institutionalize democratic norms and prevent unconstitutional changes of government.³

7.3 Sub-Regional Framework

Ghana, as a member of ECOWAS, is bound by the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), which sets detailed standards for free, fair, and transparent elections, including zero tolerance for unconstitutional accession to power. This Protocol has played a significant role in shaping electoral governance in West Africa.⁴

Cameroon, while not a member of ECOWAS, is subject to broader African Union commitments and regional norms that promote democratic governance. However, the absence of a strong sub-regional enforcement mechanism comparable to ECOWAS may partly explain differences in reform outcomes.

8. Domestic Legal Framework

In this section, both Cameroon and Ghana legal frameworks shall be examined.

8.1 Cameroon

Electoral governance in Cameroon is governed by the Constitution of 1996 (as amended) and the Electoral Code of 2012. These instruments provide for political pluralism, electoral procedures, and citizen participation in governance.

The creation of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) represents an attempt to institutionalize electoral administration. However, concerns persist regarding its independence and effectiveness, particularly in relation to executive influence and electoral credibility.⁵ While Cameroon's legal framework reflects its international and regional obligations, the gap between law and practice remains a major challenge.

8.2 Ghana

Ghana's electoral governance framework is anchored in the 1992 Constitution, which guarantees democratic governance and establishes the Electoral Commission under Article 45 as an independent body responsible for conducting elections.

Ghana's legal regime is complemented by electoral regulations and judicial oversight mechanisms that enhance transparency and accountability. The Supreme Court plays a significant role in adjudicating electoral disputes, thereby reinforcing constitutionalism and the rule of law.⁶ This institutional arrangement reflects Ghana's

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2010). *Human rights and elections: A handbook on the legal, technical and human rights aspects of elections*.

² Viljoen, F. (2012). *International human rights law in Africa* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

³ Ayee, J. R. A. (2017). The politics of elections in Ghana. *Africa Spectrum*, 52(2), 3–30.

⁴ Hartmann, C. (2016). ECOWAS and the restoration of democracy in The Gambia. *Africa Spectrum*, 51(1), 85–99.

⁵ Fombad, C. M., & Ayele, D. (2016). The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance: A critical analysis. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 16(2), 381–405.

⁶ Prempeh, H. K. (2008). Africa's constitutionalism revival: False start or new dawn? *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 5(3), 469–506.

relatively strong compliance with its international and regional obligations.

8.3 Assessment of the Legal Framework

Both Cameroon and Ghana have ratified and domesticated key international and regional legal instruments, thereby committing themselves to uphold democratic principles and electoral integrity. However, the comparative analysis reveals that formal ratification does not automatically translate into effective compliance.

Ghana demonstrates a higher degree of alignment with both the letter and spirit of its legal obligations, as reflected in credible elections and democratic stability. In contrast, Cameroon exhibits a persistent gap between formal legal commitments and actual implementation, raising concerns about the effectiveness of its compliance with binding human rights standards.¹ This disparity highlights a critical insight: the strength of electoral governance lies not only in legal frameworks but in their enforcement, institutional integrity, and political context.

9. Challenges And Reforms in Electoral Governance in Cameroon and Ghana

Electoral governance in Africa stands at a critical juncture where the promise of democratic consolidation is persistently tested by institutional weaknesses, political contestation, and uneven reform trajectories. While elections are widely held across the continent, their credibility and capacity to produce legitimate democratic outcomes remain deeply contested. Cameroon and Ghana, in this regard, present contrasting yet instructive experiences—one reflecting enduring structural constraints and the other illustrating gradual institutional strengthening. This section interrogates the principal challenges undermining electoral governance in both countries and critically evaluates the scope, nature, and effectiveness of reform efforts.

9.1 Challenges in Electoral Governance

Electoral governance in both Cameroon and Ghana is shaped by a range of structural, institutional, and political challenges that significantly affect the credibility and legitimacy of electoral processes. While the nature and intensity of these challenges differ across the two countries, they collectively reveal systemic weaknesses that undermine compliance with both constitutional guarantees and international human rights standards on political participation. These challenges are consistent with broader patterns observed across emerging democracies, where formal electoral institutions often coexist with informal practices that weaken democratic accountability.²

9.1.1 Institutional Independence of Electoral Management Bodies

A central challenge in electoral governance is the lack of institutional independence, particularly of electoral management bodies (EMBs). In Cameroon, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) has been widely criticized for its perceived proximity to the executive, raising doubts about its impartiality and credibility.³ This institutional weakness undermines the integrity of electoral processes and erodes public confidence in election outcomes.

In Ghana, although the Electoral Commission has historically enjoyed a stronger reputation for independence, it has faced increasing scrutiny over allegations of political bias, leadership disputes, and administrative inefficiencies.⁴ This underscores the broader challenge of maintaining both actual and perceived neutrality of electoral institutions, which is essential for electoral legitimacy.⁵

9.1.2 Electoral Malpractice and Irregularities

Electoral malpractice remains a persistent challenge, particularly in Cameroon. Allegations of ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, irregular voter registration processes, and lack of transparency in vote tabulation have frequently characterized elections, often resulting in contested outcomes and opposition boycotts.⁶ Such practices are inconsistent with international standards governing free and fair elections and undermine the effective realization of political rights.⁷

While Ghana has experienced comparatively fewer systemic irregularities, disputes over voter registers, electoral

¹ Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press.

² Schedler, A. (2002). The menu of manipulation. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 36–50.

³ Fombad, C. M. (2012). Cameroon's emergency powers: A recipe for (un)constitutional dictatorship? *Journal of African Law*, 56(1), 62–81.

⁴ Debrah, E. (2016). The Electoral Commission of Ghana and the administration of elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 15(2), 25–45.

⁵ Norris, P. (2014). *Why electoral integrity matters*. Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Konings, P. (2011). The politics of neoliberal reforms in Africa: State and civil society in Cameroon. *African Studies Review*, 54(2), 167–170.

⁷ Birch, S. (2011). *Electoral malpractice*. Oxford University Press.

logistics, and collation processes have occasionally raised concerns about transparency and credibility.¹ These issues highlight that even relatively stable electoral systems require continuous institutional strengthening.

9.1.3 Limited Political Competition and Opposition Marginalization

In Cameroon, restricted political space and opposition marginalization significantly constrain electoral competitiveness. The dominance of the ruling party, coupled with administrative and legal barriers, limits meaningful participation and weakens democratic pluralism.² This phenomenon is characteristic of hybrid regimes where elections occur without genuine political contestation.

By contrast, Ghana exhibits a more competitive multiparty system, with relatively open political competition between major parties. However, high levels of political polarization and winner-takes-all dynamics sometimes create tensions that challenge inclusiveness and democratic stability.³

9.1.4 Electoral Violence and Security Concerns

Electoral violence remains a potential threat to democratic stability across Africa. Although its intensity varies, it is often linked to weak institutions, high political stakes, and socio-economic inequalities (Collier & Vicente, 2012; Norris, 2014). Cameroon has experienced episodes of electoral tension and unrest, particularly in politically sensitive and conflict-affected regions.

Ghana, while widely regarded as peaceful, has recorded localized electoral violence and security concerns, particularly during closely contested elections.⁴ These incidents underscore the importance of robust electoral security frameworks and conflict prevention mechanisms.

10. Democratic Outcomes in Cameroon and Ghana

The democratic outcomes of electoral governance provide a critical lens through which the effectiveness of electoral systems can be assessed. Beyond the mere conduct of elections, these outcomes reflect the extent to which electoral processes translate into legitimacy, political stability, citizen participation, and the consolidation of democratic institutions. In the context of Cameroon and Ghana, electoral governance has produced divergent results, shaped by differences in institutional strength, reform implementation, and adherence to democratic norms. A comparative evaluation of these outcomes offers valuable insight into how electoral systems either advance or constrain democratic development.

10.1 Electoral Legitimacy and Credibility

Ghana's electoral system continues to demonstrate relatively high levels of credibility. The 2020 general elections recorded a voter turnout of approximately 78.9%, reflecting strong citizen engagement and confidence in the electoral process. Although the results were contested, the dispute was resolved through the Supreme Court, reinforcing institutional legitimacy and adherence to the rule of law.⁵

In contrast, Cameroon's electoral credibility remains contested, even in its most recent electoral cycle. The 2025 presidential election recorded approximately 8.08 million registered voters, with a turnout of about 57.76% (approximately 4.67 million voters). The incumbent secured roughly 53–54% of the vote, while the leading opposition candidate obtained about 35%. Although these figures indicate a modest improvement compared to the 53.85% turnout recorded in 2018, the election was widely disputed by opposition actors, with concerns raised regarding transparency, electoral administration, and the credibility of the results.⁶

Recent empirical assessments further suggest that public trust in electoral processes in Cameroon remains fragile, with citizens expressing skepticism about the independence of electoral institutions and the fairness of outcomes. Afrobarometer findings reinforce this trend, indicating that a significant proportion of respondents doubt the integrity of elections and the neutrality of electoral management bodies.⁷

10.2 Political Stability and Transfer of Power

Ghana continues to exemplify democratic resilience through regular and peaceful transfers of power between

¹ Ayee, J. R. A. (2017). The politics of elections in Ghana. *Africa Spectrum*, 52(2), 3–30.

² Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Jockers, H., Kohnert, D., & Nugent, P. (2010). The successful Ghana election of 2008: A convenient myth? *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 48(1), 95–115.

⁵ Electoral Commission of Ghana. (2021). *Report on the 2020 general elections*.

⁶ International Crisis Group. (2025). *Cameroon's 2025 presidential election and its implications for democratic governance*.

⁷ Afrobarometer. (2023). *Public attitudes toward democracy and governance in Africa*.

major political parties. Since 2000, multiple transitions have occurred without major conflict, reinforcing political stability and democratic consolidation.¹ These transitions demonstrate the effectiveness of electoral processes as mechanisms for leadership renewal and accountability.

By contrast, Cameroon has experienced prolonged incumbency without meaningful political alternation. Despite regular elections, leadership continuity has persisted for decades, limiting democratic competition and weakening accountability mechanisms. This lack of turnover reduces the capacity of elections to function as instruments of political change.²

10.3 Public Trust and Political Participation

Empirical evidence highlights significant disparities in citizen engagement. Ghana consistently records high voter turnout, with nearly 79% participation in the 2020 elections, reflecting strong public confidence and active civic engagement. The role of civil society organizations and domestic election observers further enhances transparency and trust in the electoral process.³ In Cameroon, however, participation levels are comparatively lower and uneven. The 2020 parliamentary elections recorded turnout below 45%, with significantly reduced participation in conflict-affected Anglophone regions due to insecurity and boycott calls.⁴ Afrobarometer data also indicate declining public trust in electoral institutions, contributing to voter apathy and reduced political participation.⁵

10.4 Democratic Consolidation and Protection of Rights

Ghana's democratic system continues to exhibit progressive institutional consolidation, supported by judicial independence, respect for constitutionalism, and protection of civil liberties. Electoral disputes are typically resolved through legal channels, reinforcing adherence to the rule of law and democratic norms.⁶

In contrast, Cameroon demonstrates characteristics of a hybrid political system, where formal democratic institutions coexist with constraints on political freedoms. Electoral processes have been affected by restrictions on opposition activities, limitations on media freedom, and ongoing security challenges, particularly in the Anglophone regions. These factors undermine compliance with international human rights standards and weaken the overall democratic impact of elections.⁷

11. Reforms in Electoral Governance

To address changes identified, there is need for several reforms to be made. Each shall be examined seriatim.

11.1 Institutional and Administrative Reforms

Ghana has undertaken significant reforms aimed at strengthening electoral administration, including the introduction of biometric voter registration, improvements in electoral logistics, and enhanced transparency in results management. These reforms have contributed to increased public trust and electoral credibility.⁸

Cameroon has also implemented reforms, notably the establishment of ELECAM as an electoral body and periodic adjustments to electoral procedures. However, these reforms have been criticized as insufficient, particularly in addressing concerns about institutional autonomy and executive influence.⁹

11.2 Legal and Procedural Reforms

Legal reforms have been central to efforts to improve electoral governance in both countries. In Ghana, reforms have strengthened electoral dispute resolution mechanisms and enhanced stakeholder participation, contributing to greater electoral transparency and accountability.¹⁰

In Cameroon, while legal reforms have been introduced, they have often failed to address fundamental structural

¹ Cheeseman, N., Lynch, G., & Willis, J. (2020). *The moral economy of elections in Africa: Democracy, voting and virtue*. Cambridge University Press.

² Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press.

³ Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2015). Africa's waning democratic commitment. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), 101–113.

⁴ International Crisis Group. (2020). *Cameroon's Anglophone crisis and the risks to elections*.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Prempeh, H. K. (2021). Judicial independence and electoral justice in Ghana. *African Studies Review*, 64(2), 1–20.

⁷ Freedom House. (2023). *Freedom in the world: Cameroon country report*.

⁸ Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2015). Africa's waning democratic commitment. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), 101–113.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

issues, including the concentration of power and limited checks on electoral authorities, thereby reducing their overall effectiveness.¹

11.3 Role of Civil Society and International Actors

Civil society organizations and international observers have played a crucial role in promoting electoral accountability. In Ghana, civil society engagement has strengthened monitoring, transparency, and public confidence in elections.

In Cameroon, however, civil society influence has been more constrained, and international observation missions, while present, have had limited impact on substantive electoral reforms.² This reflects broader challenges in translating external recommendations into domestic institutional change.

11.4 Regional Normative Framework

At the continental level, instruments such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001) provide normative standards for electoral governance. These frameworks emphasize transparency, accountability, and democratic participation. However, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in states where domestic political dynamics undermine reform commitments.³

11.5 Comparative Perspective on Challenges and Reforms

A comparative analysis reveals that the effectiveness of electoral reforms is largely contingent upon political will, institutional capacity, and the broader governance environment. Ghana's relative success reflects sustained commitment to reform, stronger institutional frameworks, and active civic engagement. In contrast, Cameroon's experience highlights the limitations of reforms that are not accompanied by genuine institutional independence and political inclusivity.

Ultimately, the persistence of electoral challenges alongside uneven reform outcomes underscores the need for more comprehensive and context-sensitive approaches to electoral governance. Effective reform must extend beyond formal legal adjustments to address deeper structural and political constraints, ensuring alignment with international human rights standards and the realization of credible democratic outcomes.⁴

12. Summary of Findings

This study set out to examine the relationship between electoral governance, reform processes, and democratic outcomes in Cameroon and Ghana within the framework of international human rights law. Drawing on doctrinal and comparative analysis, several key findings emerge.

First, the study finds that institutional independence is the most critical determinant of credible electoral governance. Ghana's relatively stronger democratic outcomes are closely linked to the operational autonomy and institutional capacity of its Electoral Commission, whereas Cameroon's electoral credibility is significantly undermined by perceptions of executive influence over electoral institutions. This disparity reinforces the centrality of the rule of law in ensuring impartial electoral administration and compliance with international standards such as Article 25 of the ICCPR.

Second, the study reveals that electoral reforms, while necessary, are insufficient in isolation. In Ghana, reforms have been more comprehensive and effectively implemented, contributing to improved transparency, stakeholder trust, and peaceful transfers of power. In contrast, Cameroon's reforms have largely been incremental and procedural, failing to address deeper structural issues such as political dominance, limited accountability, and weak enforcement mechanisms. This demonstrates that the success of reforms depends not merely on their adoption but on their depth, implementation, and political context.

Third, the findings indicate that electoral malpractice and limited political competition remain persistent obstacles to democratic consolidation, particularly in Cameroon. Practices such as voter intimidation, lack of transparency, and opposition marginalization significantly constrain the realization of genuine political participation, contrary to the provisions of international and regional human rights instruments. While Ghana performs comparatively better, challenges such as political polarization and occasional electoral disputes highlight that democratic consolidation remains an ongoing process.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Fall, I. M. (2011). *Election management bodies in West Africa: A comparative study of the contribution of electoral commissions to the strengthening of democracy*. ECOWAS.

³ Hartmann, C. (2016). ECOWAS and the restoration of democracy in The Gambia. *Africa Spectrum*, 51(1), 85–99.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Fourth, the study establishes that the effectiveness of electoral governance must be assessed not only in legal terms but also in terms of societal outcomes. From a utilitarian perspective, Ghana's electoral system has contributed to greater political stability, public trust, and acceptance of electoral outcomes.

Conversely, Cameroon's electoral processes have produced lower levels of public confidence and limited democratic legitimacy, indicating weaker overall societal benefits.

Finally, the study finds that regional and international normative frameworks have had uneven influence on domestic electoral governance. While instruments such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance provide important standards, their implementation is largely dependent on domestic political will and institutional capacity. Ghana has demonstrated greater alignment with these frameworks, whereas Cameroon's compliance remains more formal than substantive.

In sum, the findings underscore that credible electoral governance in Africa requires more than formal legal structures; it demands genuine institutional independence, effective reform implementation, and sustained commitment to democratic principles. The comparative experience of Cameroon and Ghana illustrates that where these conditions are present, electoral processes are more likely to yield legitimate and stable democratic outcomes.

13. Conclusions

This article has examined electoral governance in Africa through a comparative analysis of Cameroon and Ghana, situating the discussion within the normative framework of international human rights law. It has demonstrated that while both states have formally embraced democratic institutions and electoral processes, the quality, credibility, and outcomes of these processes differ significantly due to variations in institutional design, political context, and the implementation of reforms.

The analysis underscores that electoral governance is fundamentally a legal and institutional question, not merely a procedural or political one. The extent to which elections reflect the will of the people depends largely on adherence to rule of law principles, including institutional independence, transparency, accountability, and equal political participation. In this regard, Ghana's electoral system illustrates how sustained reforms, stronger institutional autonomy, and active civic engagement can enhance electoral credibility and democratic consolidation. Conversely, Cameroon's experience reveals the limitations of formal compliance with electoral norms in the absence of genuine institutional independence and political inclusivity.

Furthermore, the study highlights that electoral reforms, while necessary, must be substantive rather than symbolic. Incremental or procedurally focused reforms that fail to address underlying structural constraints—such as executive dominance, weak oversight mechanisms, and restricted political competition—are unlikely to produce meaningful democratic outcomes. This finding reinforces the importance of aligning domestic electoral frameworks not only with the letter but also with the spirit of international human rights obligations, particularly those relating to political participation under instruments such as the ICCPR and the African Charter.

From a broader analytical perspective, the integration of Rule of Law Theory and Utilitarian Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of electoral governance. While the rule of law emphasizes compliance with legal norms and institutional integrity, the utilitarian perspective draws attention to the societal consequences of electoral processes, including political stability, public trust, and democratic legitimacy. The comparative evidence suggests that effective electoral governance must satisfy both dimensions—legal validity and societal utility.

This study contributes to the existing body of scholarship by bridging the gap between legal-normative analysis and outcome-based evaluation of electoral governance in Africa. By integrating rule of law and utilitarian perspectives within a comparative framework, it advances a more holistic understanding of how electoral systems function not only as legal constructs but also as instruments shaping democratic legitimacy and societal welfare. Additionally, the juxtaposition of Cameroon and Ghana provides nuanced empirical insight into why similar constitutional and international commitments yield divergent democratic outcomes, thereby enriching debates on electoral reform and human rights compliance in emerging democracies.

Ultimately, this study affirms that credible electoral governance is indispensable to democratic legitimacy in Africa. The contrasting experiences of Ghana and Cameroon illustrate that democratic consolidation is neither automatic nor guaranteed by the mere existence of elections. Rather, it requires sustained commitment to institutional reform, respect for human rights, and the cultivation of political environments that allow for genuine competition and participation.

In conclusion, the future of electoral governance in Africa will depend on the extent to which states move beyond formal electoralism toward substantive democracy, grounded in the rule of law and responsive to the collective welfare of citizens. Without such transformation, elections risk remaining procedural rituals devoid of

genuine democratic meaning.

14. Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, a number of legal, institutional, and policy-oriented recommendations are proposed to strengthen electoral governance and enhance democratic outcomes in Cameroon and Ghana, as well as in comparable African contexts.

14.1 Strengthen Institutional Independence of Electoral Management Bodies

A primary recommendation is the need to guarantee the independence and impartiality of electoral management bodies (EMBs). This requires reforms in the appointment processes of electoral commissioners to ensure transparency, inclusiveness, and insulation from executive control. Legal frameworks should provide clear safeguards for tenure security, financial autonomy, and operational independence, in line with international standards under Article 25 of the ICCPR and Article 13 of the African Charter. In Cameroon, in particular, reforms should prioritize restructuring ELECAM to enhance its credibility and public trust.

14.2 Deepening Electoral Reforms Beyond Formalism

Electoral reforms must move beyond procedural adjustments to address underlying structural and political constraints. This includes revising electoral laws to ensure fairness in constituency delimitation, equitable access to media, and transparent vote tabulation processes. Reforms should also incorporate enforceable accountability mechanisms to sanction electoral malpractice. In Cameroon, reforms must be more substantive and transformative, while Ghana should focus on consolidating and refining existing reforms to sustain electoral credibility.

14.3 Enhancing Electoral Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms

To improve public confidence in electoral processes, there is a need to strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms. This includes the adoption of technology-driven solutions such as biometric verification systems, real-time results transmission, and open data access for electoral results. Additionally, independent electoral audit systems should be institutionalized to review electoral processes and outcomes. Judicial mechanisms for resolving electoral disputes must also be strengthened to ensure timely, impartial, and effective adjudication.

14.4 Promoting Inclusive Political Participation

Ensuring inclusive and equitable political participation is critical to democratic legitimacy. Legal and institutional reforms should remove barriers to participation for opposition parties, women, youth, and marginalized groups. In Cameroon, particular attention should be given to expanding political space and reducing administrative and political constraints on opposition participation. In Ghana, efforts should focus on addressing political polarization and promoting broader inclusivity in governance processes.

14.5 Strengthening the Role of Civil Society and Electoral Observation

Civil society organizations and election observation bodies should be empowered to play a more active role in promoting electoral integrity. Governments should facilitate, rather than restrict, civil society engagement in voter education, election monitoring, and advocacy. Furthermore, the recommendations of international and regional election observation missions should be systematically implemented to enhance electoral reforms and accountability.

14.6 Enhancing Electoral Security, Conflict Prevention Mechanisms and Strengthening Compliance with Regional and International Norms

Given the risks associated with electoral violence, it is essential to develop comprehensive electoral security frameworks. This includes training security personnel on election-specific duties, establishing early warning systems for electoral conflict, and promoting dialogue among political actors. Preventive measures should focus on addressing the root causes of electoral tensions, including political exclusion and lack of trust in institutions.

States should take concrete steps to domesticate and implement regional and international legal instruments governing elections, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and relevant human rights treaties. This includes aligning domestic laws with international standards and ensuring effective enforcement through independent institutions. Regional bodies, including the African Union and sub-regional organizations, should also enhance monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.

14.7 Fostering Political Will and Democratic Culture

Ultimately, the success of electoral governance reforms depends on the presence of genuine political will and a democratic culture. Political leaders must demonstrate commitment to democratic principles, including respect for electoral outcomes and the rule of law. Efforts should also be made to promote civic education and

democratic values among citizens, thereby strengthening public demand for accountability and good governance. In sum, these recommendations emphasize that improving electoral governance requires a holistic and sustained approach that integrates legal reform, institutional strengthening, and political transformation. Without such comprehensive efforts, electoral processes risk remaining formally democratic but substantively deficient.

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The Link Between Consignee's Liability and Ownership in Transported Goods

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Abstract

In logistics and transportation, the link between consignee's liability and ownership in transported goods is often based on legal and financial responsibilities for the cargo which refers to title to the goods and is primarily defined by the contract of carriage of goods, its legal document viz the Bill of Lading and specific incoterms. The research problem revolves on the obscured maritime legislative nature lack of specific rules that clearly spare out consignee's liability and corresponding relationship with goods in a maritime carriage contract. The main objective is to identify and portray specific circumstances under which the relationship between consignee's liability and ownership in transported goods can be established in a maritime carriage contract. Findings further proved a lacunae in the marine legislations to determine and establish consignee's relation with goods as per ownership, and demarcating boundaries for liability. This piece concludes that in spite of clarity of consignee's responsibility, there is need for their liability towards cargo ownership to be properly established. This therefore recommend a revisit of maritime legislations to strengthen responsibilities and spare out their liabilities and limitations.

Keywords: link, consignee, liability, ownership, transported goods

1. Background

The consignee has been over several years known as the entity designated to receive goods at the destination port. This personality later evolved alongside maritime trade from a simple recipient of cargo to a crucial legal entity holding title to goods in international commerce.

The legal principle governing this relationship between a consignee's liability and the transported goods in a contract of carriage primarily derived from the theory of contract for the benefit of a third-party, which allows the consignee to claim rights, but also subject them to obligations upon exercising those right, thus answering research question number four of this piece of work and the fourth specific objective. The doctrines establishing this relationship include; establishing the relationship between the contracts of sale, agency and carriage and the fact that the consignee is a party to the contract of carriage. It is then followed by the taking delivery obligation which is considered in most jurisdictions not just to be a right but also an obligation of the consignee, the ownership rights in the transported goods where the consignee is a mere agent or intermediary under the contract of carriage, consignee's rejection of the transported goods thus frustrating the contracts of sale and carriage and finally, establishing a link in scenarios where the consignee failed to provide storage for the transported cargo.

2. Establishing a Factual Link or Relationship Between the Goods and a Consignee as Party to the Contract of Carriage

In a situation where the consignee is already a party to the contract, the link is primarily achieved through the documentary evidence (Bill of Lading or Consignment Note) and the formal exercise of rights under the contract. While the shipper usually initiates the contract, the consignee becomes a direct party to the contract and expressing his ownership rights by presenting the shipping documents at the port of destination, accepting liability for freight, or by explicitly being named as the owner in the shipping contract. The easiest way of facilitating an understanding of this relationship is by inscribing the recipient as rightful owner on the original Bill of Lading. This document serves as evidence of the contract of carriage and a document of title, identifying who is entitled to legal ownership of the cargo. In road or air transport, the consignment note acts as prima facie evidence of the contract and the carrier's receipt of goods for the consignee. As a party to the contract, the consignee is related to the transported cargo by becoming the endorsee (holder) of the document proving an existence of a contract. The presentation of the original Bill of Lading at the port of discharge connects the consignee to the goods as the Bonafide party to the contract. In a situation where the terms on the bill of lading shows "freight collect" which means the freight charges will be paid by the consignee designated to collect the cargo, and this clearly confirms the action of the role played by the consignee in the said contract as a party. Under laws like the UK Carriage of Goods by sea Act 1924 (COGSA 1924) or similar international regulations, the rights of suit under the contract are transferred to the consignee named in the Bill of Lading. However, some jurisdictions stipulate that the contract between the shipper and the carrier is considered a third-party beneficiary contract with the consignee being the beneficiary. The consignee now becomes a party by accepting this benefits such as documenting delivery of the cargo.

2.1 Link Established Through Hague-Visby Rules, Hamburg Rules, and Rotterdam Rules

These are international conventions that outline the rights and responsibilities of parties involved in the carriage of goods by sea. The contracts of sale, agency, and carriage are linked, where the sale contract (CISG) requires a carriage contract usually (Hamburg Rules 1978, and Rotterdam Rules 2008) to transport goods, frequently involving agents like freight forwarders. The Hamburg and Rotterdam Rules impact risks transfer in the sale contract and obligations for agents via agency in a carriage contract. In a contract of sale, the CIF and FOB terms determine when risks pass from the seller to the buyer often through the Bill of Lading (BOL), whereas the Hamburg and Rotterdam Rules in a carriage contract define the carrier and shipper towards the cargo. The Hamburg Rules of 1978 broaden the liability for sea carriage, and stating the limitation of financial liability to 835 SDRs per package or 2.5 SDRs per kg, while the Rotterdam Rules extend liability to "door-to-door" or "multimodal" transport, covering the carrier from port-to-port and even beyond, if agreed upon. With regards to an agency contract, freight forwarders/brokers act on behalf of shippers or consignees through the Rotterdam Rules that broaden the definition of the performing party and agents if they perform any of the carrier's duties.

2.2 The United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG) Governs Sale Contracts

Then United Nations Convention on Contracts for the Carriage of Goods (CISG) primarily governs the rights and obligations of the buyer and seller in a contract for the sale of goods specifically in its Art 4. Generally, this CISG does not regulate the contractual relationships of third-parties such as carriers or agents which in most cases are governed by national laws and specific international conventions like the CMR Convention for road transport and the Hague-Visby for sea transport respectively. The CISG however interacts directly with carriage and agency contracts through its provisions on delivery, risk, and the definition of the concept of sale. The CISG integrates the carriage contracts in to the seller's delivery obligations, and key provisions impacting the transport process. Art 31 (a) and 67-68 of the same convention regulating delivery and risk when carriage is involved and fulfills the seller's obligation by handing goods to the first carrier. At this point, risk passes to the buyer or at the point when the contract has been concluded with goods already in transit. Art 32 (2) of the CISG regulates the sellers/consignor's responsibilities in ensuring that the carriage contract is carried out appropriately for goods to arrive their final destination safely. Concerning inspection, the buyer/consignee is involved according to Art 38 (2) in the examination of the cargo. While the CISG governs sales made through intermediaries, it does not apply to the internal, legal relationship between a principal and agent, or matters of agency authority. According to Art 3 of the CISG, it is applied when an agent acts as a buyer/ seller in taking title but not when the agent is only providing services.

2.3 Establishing a Relationship Where the Consignee Fails to Provide Storage for the Transported Goods

When a consignee fails to provide storage of the transported goods, they are in breach of the duty to receive cargo, triggering many legal situations under standard contracts of carriage such as the contracts existing under the Hague-Visby Rules or standard maritime/roadway bill of lading. The carrier is not in any way supposed to or required to hold the goods indefinitely and is generally entitled to protect its interests and mitigate damages. If the consignee fails to take delivery promptly, the carrier has the right to discharge the goods in to a warehouse or other appropriate storage facility. In situations where the goods are well stored in a warehouse, this is most often

considered to be “constructive delivery”, and the carrier’s risks for loss or damage is significantly reduced or terminated. As a result of this, all expenses including warehousing costs, storage fees and additional handling costs must be borne by the consignee for his negligence of not receiving the goods as he ought to. With regards to the safety of the warehoused cargo, the carrier still has a responsibility to ensure the goods are stored in an appropriate place characterized by temperature control for instance.

If the responsibility of the carrier to the goods is extended when the goods cannot be taken over by the merchant party, it will be unfair for the carrier. Though the term in Article 86 of the CMC is not so clear, from the words that the risks and expenses to the goods “shall be borne by the consignee” after the discharging and warehousing of them. It can be concluded that the warehousing of the goods by the master shall constitute a constructive delivery and the carrier is then discharged from the traditional obligation of delivery to the consignee personally. Meanwhile, the contract of carriage is terminated upon this warehousing. In addition, when a bill of lading has been issued, the presentation rule will not bind the carrier in such case. However, the simple phraseology of the Article 86 of CMC does not match the shipping carriage very well. From the words of the provision, it is easily perceived that the risk and expenses will be transferred to the consignee as soon as the goods have been discharged into a warehouse or other appropriate place. But in the modern practice, except under charterparties, almost no goods are taken over alongside the ship. Therefore, after the arrival at the destination, the goods will generally be discharged into the container yard, CFS or warehouses. And, under the tariff of the carrier and the rules of the container yards or CFS, there is usually a specified free period for the keeping of the goods during which the consignee does not have to pay the storage charges. In Chinese ports, the free period is usually 3 to 5 days after the arrival or after the notice of the arrival. Considerable bills of lading provide that the consignee shall take the delivery during the specified period under the tariff, which generally lasts as long as the free period of storage. In addition, with the development of the agreement on delivery, certain contracts will provide the time for delivery. So, the stated specified period of time for delivery is both the duty and the right for the consignee. After the expiration of the period, failure to take the delivery may be deemed delay, but before the lapse of it, the consignee or other persons are not forced to receiver the goods.

According to the contract theory, if there is no such agreement on the period, a reasonable time is required, and the carrier or vessel “cannot discharge his liability by landing them immediately on the ship’s arrival.” In other views, the abovementioned 3 to 5 days of free period in practice may be of reference to the reasonable period. So, before the agreed or reasonable period for delivery has lapsed, the obligation to receive the goods is not due, the carrier is still under the responsibility to the delivery, and risks to the goods are borne by the carrier at the meantime. Under the CMC, at least the risks to the containerized goods are still borne by the carrier before the aforesaid period is due. Whilst, as the bulk and general cargos are concerned, the risks to the goods will transfer to the consignee once the goods are discharged from the vessels, but the cease of risk on the carrier results from the stipulation of responsibility period not from the remedy for the carrier.

Therefore, before the lapse of the agreed or reasonable period, the carrier is not entitled to the remedy under the Article 86 of CMC. In addition, since the remedy can be available only after the discharge and certain period, consequently, it will not be the master to carry out the remedy of warehousing or storage. So, it is more reasonable to put the “carrier” instead of the “master” in Article 86. Though this “constructive delivery” is an alternative of the actual delivery, the carrier is still under the responsibility not to infringe any property right or title to the goods of others. The latter is an absolute obligation not only under a contract.

However, the breach of the obligation to receive the and delivery, the duty of the care of the goods on the carrier will be reduced. Briefly, the carrier shall exercise the remedy properly. First of all, “properly” means that the carrier shall do due diligence to store the goods. He shall find a warehouse or other place suitable for receiving and storing the goods. The place for storage shall be appropriate to the characteristics of the goods, for instance, the temperature and ventilation shall be fine for certain goods.

Moreover, it shall be safe under the applicable law and policy, such as the customs regulations of the port. In addition, when choosing the storage place, the carrier shall take a reasonable consideration for the convenience of the consignee, and, without legal authorization, the carrier shall not store the goods in places other than the agreed range. If the place chosen by the carrier is not appropriate, the carrier shall, if possible, re-store the goods in an appropriate place and may recover the additional costs occurred to the person who takes the goods owing to inconvenience or unsuitability of the warehouse or place.

When the carrier has done “due diligence,” he shall not be liable for the damages caused from such unsuitability of the warehouses or other storage places, and, if the storage place became inappropriate simply after the goods have been moved into, the carrier shall no longer be liable for the damages to the goods arising therefrom. The “duty of taking care of them devolves upon warehouseman,” and the “risks and expenses shall be borne by the consignee.” The carrier shall be liable for the damages only if the damages have resulted from his intentional act or gross negligence.

2.4 Link Where the Consignee Determines Ownership Rights in the Transported Goods Sold

In a sale of goods contract, the buyer plays a crucial role in determining when ownership rights are transferred. The buyer's actions and intentions, as well as the terms of the contract, influence when ownership shift from the buyer to the seller to the buyer. Generally, ownership passes when the parties intend it to, but the buyer's acceptance of the goods, or actions adopting the transaction like (reselling them), can finalize the transfer. If the buyer retains the goods beyond a reasonable time without rejecting them, ownership may also pass.

Parties' intent: The primary factor in determining ownership transfer is the parties' intent, as expressed in the contract or inferred from their conduct. They can explicitly agree on when ownership transfers, even if it differ from delivery.

Acceptance and Action: The buyer's explicit or implicit acceptance of the goods, as demonstrated as signifying approval or taking actions that adopt the transaction (like reselling), can transfer ownership. If the buyer retains the goods beyond a specified time for rejection or a reasonable time, ownership may transfer.

Specific and Ascertained Goods: For specific goods (those identified and agreed upon at the time of the contract), ownership often transfers when the contract is made, regardless of payment or delivery. However, the parties can still agree on a different time for ownership transfer. On the part of future goods (those not yet in existence or not yet identified), ownership typically transfers when the goods are appropriated to the contract and delivered to the buyer. The buyer's acceptance of the delivery or notice of delivery can still signify the transfer of ownership.

Failure to Reject: If the contract specifies a time for rejecting goods, the buyer's failure to reject within that time can transfer ownership. Even without a specified time, a buyer's unreasonable delay in rejecting the goods can also lead to transfer of ownership. The buyer is expected to inspect the goods and reject them within a reasonable time if they are not in conformity with the contract.

Unascertained Goods: For ascertained goods (defined by description or sample), ownership transfer when the goods are identified and appropriated to the contract, often upon delivery to the buyer. **Reservation of Rights of Disposal:** A seller can reserve the right to dispose of the goods until certain conditions are met, such as payment of the price. This means the buyer does not acquire ownership until those conditions are fulfilled.

Importance of Understanding: Understanding when ownership transfer is crucial because it determines who bears the risk of loss or damage to the goods and who has the right to dispose of them. For example, if the goods are damaged after ownership has passed to the buyer, the buyer is generally responsible for the loss.

In summary, the buyer plays a crucial role in determining when ownership rights are transferred. Their actions, intentions, and acceptance (or failure to reject) of the goods are all factors that the law considers in determining when ownership transfers from seller to the buyer.

3. Link Where the Consignee Is the Beneficial Owner of the Transported GOODS

The second principle addresses situations where the consignee has beneficial ownership of the goods or fail to properly document their agency status. In such cases, the consignee becomes fully liable for all freight charges, including any additional costs incurred beyond those billed at delivery. This ensures that someone with a direct economic stake in the shipment ultimately bears the cost of its transportation. A consignee primarily becomes a party to the contract of carriage when they hold the bill of lading, which serves as a document of title and evidence of the contract. Other instances include cases where the buyer pays carriage charges, is identified as the consignee or party to be notified, or has rights transferred to them by legislation like the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act 1992. A buyer becomes a party to the contract of carriage and has a relation to the transported goods by being the consignee named on the bill of lading, presenting the bill of lading to receive the cargo, or by directly entering into the contract with the carrier if they are responsible for arranging transport under the sale contract. This occurs when the terms of such a contract, or Incoterms like CIF, place the responsibility of arranging and paying for the carriage on the buyer, making them the shipper and giving them a direct legal relationship with the possession and ownership of the goods transported. When the buyer is the shipper and if the sales contract dictates (through a specific Incoterm) that the buyer is responsible for arranging and paying for the transport, they act as the shipper in the contract of carriage. Again, the buyer can also become the consignee or the person to whom the goods are to be delivered, and they must present the bill of lading to claim the cargo. A bill of lading enables a consignee at the place of destination to prove his rights to the goods, thus ownership. The modern bill of lading can be described as a legal document or a shipment receipt by or on behalf of the carrier and issued to the shipper acknowledging that goods, as described in it have been shipped in a particular vessel to a specified destination or have been received in a ship owner's custody for shipment.

Where the buyer in a sales contract becomes the consignee in a contract of carriage and has a beneficial interest in the ownership of the goods, the specific Incoterm used that connects the consignee's liability to the ownership

of the goods is EXW (Ex Works). Under EXW, the seller makes the goods available at their location, and the buyer bears all the costs and risks for loading, transportation, customs clearance, and delivery to the final destination. It means the buyer is responsible for getting the product out of the seller's warehouse, onto the mode of transportation, through customs, and to their warehouse. EXW terms pass the bulk of the responsibility onto the buyer. The only thing the shipper needs to do is make sure the goods make it to that initial pickup point. While that might sound like the buyer gets a short stick, EXW does have some distinct benefits. The main benefit is that EXW terms come with few surprises. The buyer has full control over the shipment, so they will get a clear picture of upfront costs, and can make sure that the shipper is not padding margins or inflating delivery costs. This term is ideal when the buyer has significant logistical expertise and wants full control over the entire shipping process to manage costs.

Regarding issues for liability of beneficial owner, payment of rates for transportation of a shipment by a carrier, broker, or freight forwarder except a household goods carrier, is determined under this section when the transportation is provided under a bill of lading other than a bill of lading that requires prepayment of the freight charges. A consignee is liable for rates billed at the time of delivery for the goods for the transportation if that consignee is an agent only and has no beneficial title or interest in the property, and when he gives a written notice of the agency relationship to the carrier when the consignee accepts delivery or the shipment. Here, the beneficial owner of the property is liable for those additional rates. By balancing this principles, a logical and equitable approach to consignee liability is used. For consignees, it highlights the importance of clarity in their roles be it as an agent, or beneficial owner, and the necessity of documenting their status to avoid unexpected financial exposure. The statute ensures that there is always a responsible party to pursue for unpaid freight charges, whether it is the consignee or the ultimate beneficial owner of the transported goods. Through its structured approach to liability, it underscores the interconnected agreements and serves as a reminder to all participants in the logistic chain to clearly define and communicate their roles, for this is a safeguard against unwarranted liability to consignees only if the rules are followed.

3.1 Establishing the Link Between the Contracts of Sale, Carriage, and Agency

The contracts of sale, agency, and carriage are fundamental to commercial law and often intersect in transactions, particularly in international trade. Despite having distinct legal structures, transferring ownership, creating representation, and transporting goods respectively, they share several legal and practical links or similarities. Contracts of sale, carriage, and agency agreements are distinct but interdependent in commercial law. A contract of sale triggers the need for carriage by transporting the goods, while agency acts as the mechanism enabling a party such as a freight forwarder, to arrange carriage and handle sales on behalf of a principal who may either be a seller or a buyer.

The link between contracts of sale, carriage and agency is that an agency contract can facilitate the other two. In an agency contract, an agent might be authorized to negotiate sales then arrange the carriage of goods for that sale, and manage other logistical aspects on behalf of the principal (seller or buyer). The contract of carriage is the agreement to transport goods, while the agency contract empowers an agent to act on behalf of one of the parties in the sale and carriage process, such as an agent who arranges shipping for a seller's goods in a sale. An agency contract is a legally binding agreement that establishes a relationship between two parties, the principal and the agent, depending on specific rules. In this contractual arrangement, the principal grants authority to the agent to act on their behalf in specific matters or transactions. The interconnectedness of a contract of sale, a carriage contract, and an agency contract becomes evident in the context of commercial transactions involving the movement of goods, particularly international trade. These agreements frequently overlap and are necessary for the successful delivery of products from a seller to a buyer.

3.2 The Role of the Buyer or Consignee in Determining Ownership Rights in the Goods Transported

In a sale of goods contract, the buyer plays a crucial role in determining when ownership rights are transferred. The buyer's actions and intentions, as well as the terms of the contract, influence when ownership shift from the seller (consignor) to the buyer (consignee) by so doing directing the consignee's link to the cargo as the owner. Generally, ownership passes when the parties intend it to, but the buyer's acceptance of the goods, or actions adopting the transaction like (reselling them), can finalize the transfer. If the buyer retains the goods beyond a reasonable time without rejecting them, ownership may also pass and his relationship with regards to the goods in terms of ownership equally determined.

Parties' intent: The primary factor in determining ownership transfer is the parties' intent, as expressed in the contract or inferred from their conduct. They can explicitly agree on when ownership transfers, even if it differ from delivery.

Acceptance and Action: The buyer's explicit or implicit acceptance of the goods, as demonstrated as signifying approval or taking actions that adopt the transaction (like reselling), can transfer ownership. If the consignee

retains the goods beyond a specified time for rejection or a reasonable time, ownership may transfer.

Specific and Ascertained Goods: For specific goods (those identified and agreed upon at the time of the contract), ownership often transfers when the contract is made, regardless of payment or delivery. However, the parties can still agree on a different time for ownership transfer. On the part of future goods (those not yet in existence or not yet identified), ownership typically transfers when the goods are appropriated to the contract and delivered to the buyer. The buyer's acceptance of the delivery or notice of delivery can still signify the transfer of ownership.

4. Link Where the Consignee Is a Mere Agent or Intermediary to the Transported Goods

A buyer can act as a middleman when they purchase goods with the intent to resell them, acting as a merchant middleman by taking ownership, storing, and redistributing the products for a profit. This occurs in circumstances such as a buyer purchasing goods to fulfill a contract with another party, reselling goods without a reasonable opportunity for examination, or when the buyer has expertise in a market that allows them to efficiently connect producers and consumers. The most common scenario is when buyers purchase goods from one supplier and then resells them to another end-user for more than they paid. The role of a middleman or intermediary, is to enhance business transactions between parties to the contract such as the buyer or consignee and seller or consignor typically in return for a commission or other form of fee that may be paid by the buyer, seller or both in some circumstances. Consignees or buyers may also act as middlemen to meet contractual obligations with different customers. This is often seen in international trade where goods are destined for export to a new market.

The law provides a critical framework for determining who is ultimately responsible for payment when goods are delivered to a consignee other than the original shipper or consignor. This federal statute helps clarify the roles and liabilities of the parties in the shipping process, ensuring that carriers are not left uncompensated for their services while offering protections to intermediaries who facilitate delivery without ownership interest in the goods. Thus, through payment of freight, a link is established between the consignee and the ownership in the goods. Two key principles are established here. First, it recognizes that not all consignees have the same relationship with the goods they receive. Some consignees act purely as agents or middlemen who facilitate the logistic process on behalf of the official owner without owning or profiting directly from the goods themselves. For these consignees, liability is limited. Furthermore, if consignees successfully limit their liability by proving they are merely middlemen or intermediaries, liability for unpaid charges shifts to the beneficial owner of the goods. They are only responsible for freight charges billed at time of delivery, and even this limited liability requires the consignee to provide written notice to the carrier affirming their agency status and lack of ownership interest. This ensures that the carriers are aware of the consignee's limited role and protects the agent from bearing undue financial responsibility for charges beyond their control.

A buyer or consignee of goods is directly related to the transported goods primarily through ownership transfer from the seller to the buyer, the assumption of risk, and the specific legal responsibility defined in the sales and shipping documents.

4.1 Establishing a Link in an Instance Wherein an Agent Works Hard to Secure and Procure the Interest of His Principal Whereas He Is not the Owner of the Transported Goods

A situation in which an agent works hard to procure the interest of his principal despite not owning the transported goods is a standard aspect of the legal framework surrounding agency and the carriage of goods. This duty is inherent in the agent's role and is rooted in the agent's fiduciary obligation to the principal, as established through their agreement. An agent, such as a freight forwarder, broker, or carrier's representative is engaged by a principal who may either be a seller or buyer of goods to manage the logistics and transport of cargo. The agent's primary responsibility is to act in the principal's best interest to ensure the goods reach their destination safely, on time, and in compliance with all relevant regulations. The central ideas of this scenario can be illustrated as follows.

In a contractual obligation where a relationship is defined by a contract in which the agent agrees to perform specific duties in exchange for a fee. The agent does not take ownership of the goods but they rather manage the process of transportation. Here, the agent's task may include arranging appropriate transport, handling customs clearance and documentation. Securing adequate insurance coverage, monitoring the shipment and resolving any issues that arise. The most significant requirement of the fact that for an action performed by an agent with third-parties on his own behalf, but at the expense of the principal, a specified agent is considered the owner of obligations and rights, regardless of the fact that the principal must enter in to a free relationship with a third-party to comply with the agreement. But in the document, when a legal transaction is concluded on behalf of the principal, all obligations and rights will be carried out by him. An agency contract is usually concluded between professional subjects of the economic market, which in some cases exclude the existence of fiduciary,

personal-trust relations between the parties who signed it, in contrast to the contract of assignment. Moreover, the agency contract is always paid, which causes the principal to pay the agent a fee in the amount and in the manner prescribed by the agency contract, thus exempting the agent of ownership of any sort. If the agency contract does not specify or provide for a condition on the amount of the agent's remuneration, the remuneration is subject to payment in the amount of the price that, under comparable circumstances, is usually charged for similar work or services. In this case, the agency fee is payable within a week from the moment when the agent has submitted a report on the work done to the principal.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusively, the link between the consignee's liability and the transported goods is a conditional, often secondary, but crucial aspect of a contract of carriage. While the consignor is generally and primarily liable for freight charges, the consignee becomes secondarily and jointly liable by receiving the goods and benefiting from the transport. The consignee is generally liable for damage occurring after they take physical possession of the goods. When a broker or shipper fails to pay freight, many carriers feel like they have hit a dead end. But under the rights circumstances, the consignee can be held liable and responsible for unpaid freight charges. Whereas the consignor is typically responsible for the initiation of transport, the consignee's liability becomes active primarily upon the exercise of rights, specifically taking delivery of the goods or demanding their release. It is concluded that, when a consignee accepts the goods, they often impliedly accept the terms of the bill of lading, assuming liability for outstanding freight charges, demurrage and duties. It is recommended that, there is need to amend the Maritime Code to address specific issues surrounding consignees' liabilities, their entitlement to transported goods and most especially their compensation rules as well as limit of compensation in order to make the limitation amount as far as possible represent the weighted average unit value of cargo carried.

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Children as Vulnerable Persons in Armed Conflicts: A Legal Analysis of the Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon

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Abstract

Armed conflicts have a disproportionate impact on civilian populations, with children being among the most vulnerable. Their physical immaturity, dependence on adults, and limited capacity for self-protection expose them to heightened risks of violence, exploitation, displacement and deprivation of their fundamental rights. This study examines the legal status of children as vulnerable persons in armed conflict, with specific focus on the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon. It adopts a qualitative research methodology and employs the doctrinal method, relying on content analysis of both primary and secondary sources of data. The study is underpinned by Martha Fineman's Vulnerability theory and the Human Rights-Based Approach, which emphasise the responsibility of the State to provide enhanced protection for inherently vulnerable groups. The study finds that the Anglophone conflict has significantly intensified violations of children's rights to health, education and overall development, while also exposing them to various forms of exploitation. Although international human rights law and international humanitarian law provide a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of children in armed conflicts, their effectiveness is undermined by weak enforcement, insecurity and socio-economic challenges. The study concludes that protecting children in armed conflicts must remain a central legal and policy priority. It therefore recommends the implementation of stronger enforcement mechanisms, targeted training programs and effective reintegration and psychosocial support systems.

Keywords: children, vulnerable, armed conflict, Anglophone, Cameroon

1. Introduction

Children occupy a unique and privileged position in society as individuals entitled to special protection under international human rights and international humanitarian law.¹ They begin life as totally dependent beings that must rely heavily on adults for nurturing, survival and development.² In situations of armed conflicts, their vulnerability is significantly exacerbated.³ Children may be separated from their families, displaced from their communities, recruited as soldiers, denied access to education and health care.⁴ Thus, conflicts not only threaten their immediate safety but also undermine the social and institutional conditions necessary for their long-term

¹ L. Muthoga. (1992). "Introducing the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child", paper presented at the International Conference of the Rights of a Child, organized by Community Law Centre at the University of Cape town, p. 123.

² Child's Rights and why they matter? Available at <https://www.unicef.org> last accessed 21st February, 2026.

³ N. Mbella & M. Mbella, (2025). Child Trafficking in Conflicts: An Appraisal of Cameroon's Legal Framework. *Journal of Tertiary and Industrial Sciences*, 5(1).

⁴ R. Sheehan. (2012). *Vulnerable Children and the Law*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, p. 42.

development.

The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon provides a significant context in which child protection concerns can be examined. What began in late 2016 as protests by lawyers and teachers in the North West and South West Regions, evolved into a protracted non-international armed conflict in 2017; resulting in widespread insecurity with children bearing a disproportionate share of the consequences. It is on this premise that the study seeks to analyse the legal protection of children in armed conflicts, with particular reference to the Anglophone conflict.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the existence of international and national instruments protecting children in armed conflicts, there are serious violations against children. The Anglophone conflict has exposed significant gaps between legal norms and their practical implementation. Children continue to experience grave violations, including loss of lives, abductions, disruption of their education, trafficking, sexual exploitation and recruitment into armed groups. Children, despite being recognized as rights-holders, remain inadequately protected in practice due to weak enforcement mechanisms and persistent insecurity.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Child

For the purpose of this study, a child is defined in accordance with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), as any person under the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier under the applicable national law.¹ This definition is consistent with Article 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which adopts an absolute threshold of 18 years without exception.² This definition is significant in determining the scope of legal protection afforded to children.

2.2 Armed Conflict

In international law, the concept of armed conflict is central in determining the applicability of international humanitarian law (law of war). Armed conflicts are defined as contested incompatibilities that concern a territory and involve the use of armed force between two parties. Armed conflicts have been defined, notably by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, as situations involving the use of armed force between parties, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year.³ Applying this threshold, it is evident that the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon had attained the status of a non-international armed conflict, given the scale of intensity of violence recorded since 2017.⁴

International humanitarian law (IHL) distinguishes between two types of armed conflicts; those of an international character (across borders) and those of a non-international character (within borders). An International Armed Conflict (IAC) is a conflict involving two or more states, or where one or more states have recourse to the use of armed force against another state.⁵ Furthermore, the commentary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 confirms any difference arising between two States and leading to the interventions of armed forces is an armed conflict within the meaning of Article 2, even if one of the parties denies the existence of a state of war. It makes no difference how long the conflict lasts, or how much slaughter takes place.⁶

The legal determination of a non-international armed conflict (NIAC) also referred to as an internal armed conflict⁷ is primarily governed by Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Article 1 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions.⁸ Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 provides that a non-international armed conflict exists where hostilities occur within the territory of a High

¹ UN News, Child trafficking <https://news.un.org> last accessed 20th February, 2026.

² <https://thefreedictionary.com> last accessed 23rd January, 2026.

³ The UCDP Armed Conflict Definition, www.undp.org last accessed 20th March, 2026.

⁴ Conference on Armed Conflict in the Southern Cameroons, available at www.unitiesintransition.org.

⁵ V. Sylvain. (2009). Typology of Armed Conflicts in International Humanitarian Law: Legal Concepts and Actual situations. *International Review of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, art 5, para 2.

⁶ J. Pictet. (1952). Commentary on the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, ICRC, Geneva, p. 32.

⁷ L. Nagavveni. (2017). International and Non-International Armed Conflicts and Application of International Humanitarian Law as Lex Specialis. *Chotanagpur Law Journal*, 11(11), 78-91.

⁸ International Committee of Red Cross Opinion Paper, 'How is the Term Armed Conflict Defined in International Humanitarian Law?' 2008.

Contracting Party involving governmental armed forces and an organised non-State armed groups or between such groups themselves.

However, not every situation of violence within a territory is considered a non-international armed conflict. In order to distinguish a non-international armed conflict from less serious forms of violence, such as internal disturbances, tensions and riots or acts of banditry, the situation must meet certain established threshold of confrontation. Two criteria are usually used in this regard:

- First, the violence must reach a sufficient level of intensity. This may be evidenced by factors such as the frequency and severity of attacks, the use of military weapons and the involvement of armed forces rather than ordinary law enforcers (police).
- The non-governmental group involved in the conflict must be considered as ‘parties to the conflict’, meaning that they must possess an organised armed force. This means these forces must exhibit a certain command structure and have the capacity to sustain military operations.

A more restrictive definition of NIAC was adopted for the specific purpose of Additional Protocol II 1977. This instrument applies to armed conflicts ‘which takes place in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organised armed groups which under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this protocol’.

- It introduces a requirement of territorial control by providing that non-governmental parties must exercise such territorial control as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations.
- It expressly applies only to armed conflicts between State armed forces and organised armed groups. Contrary to common art 3, the protocol does not apply to armed conflicts occurring only between non-state armed groups.

Furthermore, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (herein after ‘ICTY’), in the *Tadic case* referred to non-international armed conflict as a situation of protracted armed violence between governmental authorities and organised armed groups or between such groups within a state.

Applying this threshold, it is evident that the Anglophone crisis had evolved from mere internal tensions into a non-international armed conflict. The sustained use of armed force between government forces and the organised nature of non-state armed groups (Ambazonia), coupled with the scale of persistence of violence, and clearly satisfies the intensity and organisation element required in IHL. Accordingly, the classification of the Anglophone conflict as a non-international armed conflict triggers the full application of relevant IHL provisions including those relating to the protection of civilians in war and, more specifically children as vulnerable persons.

2.3 The Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon

Cameroon’s Anglophone Conflict is one of Africa’s newest struggles for liberation deeply rooted in the country’s colonial past.¹ After World War I, Cameroon was divided between Britain and France; resulting in two distinct languages and legal systems. Even after Cameroon gained independence and later became a unitary state, the English Common Law systems continued to apply in the two Anglophone Regions while the French Civil Law systems applied in the 8 French-Speaking Regions. The conflict stemmed from long-standing grievances between the English-speaking regions over economic and political marginalization by the French-speaking majority.² Anglophones constituting about 20% of the country’s population reported underdevelopment and lack of representation in top government positions.³ Tensions began in 2016 as an Anglophone crisis with protests by lawyers and teachers against the erosion of the common law system and the increasing imposition of French legal/educational systems on them. In October 2017, this eventually evolved into separatist mobilisation and a violent armed conflict for an independent state called Ambazonia.

3. Theoretical Framework

The Vulnerability theory and the Human Rights-Based Approach provide complementary lenses to this study through which the inherent vulnerabilities of children in conflicts can be understood and the normative obligations of states as primary actors in upholding fundamental rights.

¹ H. Ngenyam & R. Azibo. (2022). The Ramification of Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: conceptual analysis of a looming Complex Disaster Emergency. *J Int Humanity Action*, 7(1), 1.

² Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads, <https://crisisgroup.org> last accessed 20th February, 2026.

³ C. Fombad. (2025). Cameroons Bicultural Conundrum: The Anglophone Special Status. *Oslo Law Review*, 11(2), 1-32.

3.1 The Vulnerability Theory

The Vulnerability Theory developed by Martha Albertson Fineman in 2008, proceeds from the idea that vulnerability is universal and inherent in the human condition.¹ By our very existence as humans, there are things we are naturally prone to experience. Although all humans are vulnerable, certain groups experience increased vulnerability because of their position, dependency or limited access to resources like infants, children, sick, the elderly and persons living with disabilities.² Vulnerability theory emphasises that the state must be responsive to the realities of human vulnerability.³ Children by virtue of their age, dependence and developmental needs, are inherently vulnerable with armed conflicts exacerbating the situation. The theory is relevant in this study as it shifts State's attention to the realities of life, urging them to create institutions capable of responding to human vulnerability.

3.2 The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)

The HRBA provides an additional analytical framework for understanding child protection in conflict settings. The HRBA developed and promoted by the United Nations Agencies is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. ⁴The HRBA has two objectives:

- To empower rights-holders to claim and exercise their rights
- To strengthen capacity of duty bearers who have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights

The HRBA is underpinned by key human rights principles (PANEL principles).⁵

Participation: This explains that everyone is entitled to active participation in decision-making processes which affect the enjoyment of their rights. Participation must be active, free and meaningful.

Accountability: Duty bearers (States) are to be held accountable for failing to fulfill their obligations towards rights-holders.

Non-discrimination and Equality: All individuals are entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind. All forms of discrimination in the realisation of human rights should be prevented and eliminated.

Legality: The law recognizes human rights and freedoms as legally enforceable entitlements and the approaches adopted should be consistent with the legal rights set out in domestic and international laws.

The HRBA is suitable for this study because it requires that children's interest be taken seriously in decision making and children themselves are to directly participate in decisions concerning them. Their voices and experiences are to be heard, and they ought not to be discriminated upon on basis of their age and dependence. The HRBA safeguards the rights of children in armed conflicts by acknowledging them as rights-holders entitled to enforceable legal protections rather than merely passive victims of war.

4. Research Methodology

The study adopts the qualitative research methodology which primarily analysis non-numerical data relating to the vulnerability of children. It employs the doctrinal method of research which is content analysis of existing literature. The primary sources of data include treaties and case law while the secondary sources of data used were information obtained from textbooks, journal articles and internet sources.

To supplement the data above, interviews were conducted with personnel involved in child protection. These interviews provided practical insights into the reality on ground and the challenges faced in protecting children in conflict. The researchers equally made use of field observations in their communities.

5. Legal Framework Relating to the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts

5.1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948

The UDHR was a declaration proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10th December,

¹ T. Haugli and M. Martnes. (2025). *Vulnerability and Children's Rights*. Scandinavian University Press, 13-29.

² M. Mayrhofer. (2025). The Concept of vulnerability and its relation to the concepts of inequality and discrimination. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 29(9), 1589-1618.

³ M. Fineman. (2017). Vulnerability and Inevitable Inequality. *Oslo Law Review*, 4(3), 133-149.

⁴ The Human Rights Based Approach to Development: Programing HRBA, <https://www.undp.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁵ A Human Rights Based Approach to the Means of Implementing Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.globalnaps.com> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

1948 as ‘a common human rights standard of achievement for all peoples and nations.’¹ It sets out basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that people ought to enjoy. The UDHR is pivotal as far as human rights are concerned as it sets the expected human rights standards to be adopted by the international community.² In fact, the UDHR serves as a foundational instrument for subsequent human rights developments. It provides that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. Article 25(2) states that “motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance”. All children whether born in or out of wedlock shall enjoy the same social protection as those born in wedlock. Moreover, Article 26 calls for free and compulsory education for children establishing the fact that education is directed towards the full development of the human personality and serves as the foundation for strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. These provisions emphasise the need for the protection of children in conflicts as education is often disrupted in times of war. Although the UDHR itself conveyed no legal authority as it was merely a declaration of basic principles of human rights and freedoms, it is cited as evidence of the shared commitment between States to protect and promote human rights.

5.2 *The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols*

International humanitarian law (IHL) is founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality, offering protection to a wide range of persons and objects during armed conflicts. Adopted on 12 August, 1949 and universally ratified, The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols protect the sick, wounded and shipwrecked persons not taking part in hostilities, prisoners of war and other detainees, civilians and civilian objects.³ Customary International humanitarian law clearly forbids the utilisation of child soldiers stating that ‘children must not be recruited into armed forces and that children must not be allowed to take part in hostilities’ in either international armed conflicts or civil wars. This therefore forbids the recruitment of child soldiers which is a prevalent form of child trafficking in conflicts.

5.2.1 The Geneva Convention IV Relating to the Protection of Civilians in Times of War 1949

The IV Geneva Convention advocates for the protection of civilian population and civilian property. The major IHL principle which makes protection of civilians possible is the fundamental distinction between civilian population and combatant population as well as between civilian objects and military objectives. The civilian population includes people who are not or are no longer taking part in hostilities (*hors de combat*). **Article 24** of the Convention explains that parties to the conflict shall take all necessary measures to ensure that children under 15, who are orphaned or are separated from their families as a result of the war, are not left to their own resources. This is a preventive action in curbing child trafficking as it ensures children stranded as a result of war be protected by states in order to reduce their vulnerability to trafficking. **Article 51 paragraph 2**, of the 1949 Geneva Convention IV provides that the occupying power may not compel or enlist children to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces. This therefore means the recruitment of child soldiers by warring parties is forbidden at all times.

5.2.2 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts 1977

It was adopted on the 8th of June, 1977 and was ratified by Cameroon in 1984. Participation of children in armed hostilities occurs too frequently and in diverse ways. This participation may range from aiding combatants (children sent to bring their weapons), to the actual recruitment of children as combatants. **Article 77(2)** of the 1977 Additional Protocol I, provides: the parties to the conflict shall take feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces.

5.2.3 Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions Relating to the Protection of Victims in Non-International Armed Conflicts 1977

This Protocol was adopted on the 8th of June, 1977 and was ratified by Cameroon in 1984. **Article 4** of this Additional Protocol specifies that children need special care and protection. It also prohibits slavery in all its forms. Both the recruitment and the direct/indirect participation of children under the age of 15 in hostilities are condemned. This provision is therefore against the use of children as soldiers, spies, suicide bombers, and cooks during armed conflicts which are prevalent forms of child trafficking.

These instruments collectively establish that children are entitled to special protection, particularly in situations

¹ Adopted on December 10, 1948, GA Resolution 217 (III) United Nations Doc A/810, 1994.

² J. Sloth-Nielsen. (2008). A Dutiful Child: The Implications of Article 31 of the African Children’s Charter. *Journal of African Law*, 52(2), 159-189, 159.

³ Protected Persons, www.icrc.org>war-and-law last accessed 10th March, 2026.

of armed conflicts. Cameroon is a state party to these instruments and by virtue of Article 45 of the Constitution, all duly ratified international laws take precedence over national laws. The State is therefore a duty bearer in the protection of children in armed conflicts.

5.3 The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the UN in 1989, entered into force in 1990 and ratified by Cameroon on 11th January, 1993.¹ It was the first and most universally accepted human rights treaty to address specifically the legal rights of children. The CRC explains who children are, all their rights, and the responsibilities States have in the protection and promotion.

The Convention goes beyond the minimum age approach that is fundamental in the ILO's Conventions and provides a broader regulatory approach to children. Through the adoption of this Convention, the international community moved beyond the minimum age convention and established a framework that requires all signatories to look at children's rights in a more holistic manner. Whilst making provision for cultural and/or other aspects of a child's life, it establishes the "the best interest of the child" principle, and for the first time gave voice to children to participate in matters affecting them.² The CRC expressly states in all actions undertaken by States, institutions and private entities, the best interest of a child must be considered before taking any decision that concerns them. The CRC provides a rights framework for children both in times of peace and times of war.

6. The Rights of Children in Armed Conflicts

Children in armed conflicts retain all fundamental human rights; including the rights to life, health, education, family, adequate standard of living and development. These rights are interdependent and essential for the holistic development of the child. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, which entitles everyone, without distinction of any kind, to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the UDHR.³ The use of the term 'everyone' underscores the universality of these rights, which apply equally to children irrespective of circumstances. Thus, children have human rights not because they are 'the adults of tomorrow' or 'the future' but because they are human beings today.⁴

6.1 The Right to Life

The right to life is the most fundamental of all human rights, as it forms the basis for the enjoyment of all other rights.⁵ It is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other rights.⁶ In its absence, all other fundamental rights cannot be enjoyed.⁷ The Convention on the Rights of the Child per Article 6 obliges States to recognize that every child has an inherent right to life, 'and to ensure to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of the child.'⁸ For children, the right to life is the chance to be able to live and have the possibility to grow, to develop and become adults.⁹ The right therefore encompasses not only protection from arbitrary deprivation of life but also the obligation to create conditions necessary for survival and development. This includes protection from violence and life threatening conditions. However, in the Anglophone conflict, this right has been undermined as children have been exposed to killings in crossfire.

6.2 The Right to Education

The right to education is guaranteed for all without discrimination as to race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political preference, age or disability.¹⁰ Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that everyone has the right to education.¹¹ Since then, the right to education has been widely recognised

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, New York, 20 November 1989, <https://treaties.un.org> last accessed 20th February, 2026.

² Art. 3 of the CRC 1989.

³ Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

⁴ Children in Vulnerable Situations: available at <https://archive.crin.org> last accessed 21st February, 2026.

⁵ A right to life: Implications for Public Health services, available at <https://www.lexology.com> last accessed 20th August, 2020.

⁶ UN Human Rights Committee publishes new general comment on the 'right to life', available at <https://www.ohchr.org> last accessed 20th February, 2026.

⁷ Right to Life, <https://www.humanium.org> last accessed 20th February, 2026.

⁸ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, G.A Res. 44/25, U.N. GAOR, 44th Sess, Supp. No. 49, at 167, U.N Doc. A/44/49, 1989, Art. 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The Right to Education, www.righttoeducation.com last accessed 20th August, 2020.

¹¹ Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

and developed by a number of international normative instruments. The right to education is fundamental for human, social and economic development and a key element to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development.¹

The right to education encompasses both entitlements and freedoms, including the right to free and compulsory primary education, right to available and accessible secondary education (including technical and vocational training), right to equal access to higher education on the basis of capacity made progressively free.² In situations of armed conflict, international humanitarian law obliges parties to the conflict to respect and protect educational institutions and ensure continuity of learning.

This right has been severely disrupted due to attacks on schools, abductions and the imposition of school boycotts by non-state armed groups. This has undermined the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by the Republic of Cameroon in 2018, for the protection and well-being of children in the country.³

6.3 Right to Health

The right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is recognized in Article 12 of International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and Article 24 of CRC. Children have the right to the highest attainable standard of health.⁴ Health is vitally important for every human being in the world. Whatever our differences may be, health is our most important commodity as a person in bad health cannot enjoy life to the fullest.⁵ Article 14 (1) and (2) of the African Charter ensures that every child has the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health as well as access to health facilities.⁶

Armed conflict significantly impairs healthcare systems by destroying infrastructure, displacing personnel and restricting access to medical supplies. The conflict has led to the destruction of health care facilities, and the obstruction of humanitarian access has greatly limited children's ability to receive adequate medical care. A number of health centers have been burnt down like the Integrated Health Center in Tole (South West), Health care facilities in Ekondo Titi (South West), Idenau (South West) and Bua-Bua (North West)⁷ and the District Hospital in Bali (North West). Moreover, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported separatists' roadblocks are hindering the transport of medical supplies to areas like Banso Baptist Hospital.⁸ In February 2021, a Doctor's without Borders ambulance was fired by armed men while responding to a duty call in Muyuka, South West Region.⁹ These have all contributed to the vulnerability of children as residents in those areas are forced to travel long distances in search of good health care.

6.4 The Right to Development

The right to development is a fundamental right enshrined in the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development. It speaks of everyone's entitlement to participate in, contribute to and enjoy the benefits of development.¹⁰ All children should have the means and opportunity to develop to their full potential.¹¹ The healthy development of children is crucial to the future well-being of any society.¹² The child is seen as an 'unfinished product', a human being in the making which indicates childhood is a journey towards a destination.¹³ Child's right to development is therefore an engineered trajectory towards adulthood.¹⁴ Conflict environment hinders the realisation of this right.

¹ Right to Education, <https://theirworld.org> last accessed 20th August, 2020.

² Understanding education as a right, available at <https://www.right-to-education.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

³ Safe School Declaration, <https://www.protectingeducation.org>, last accessed 21st February, 2026.

⁴ Article 24, of the CRC 1989.

⁵ Understanding Children's Right to Health, available at <https://www.humanium.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁶ Human Rights and Health, available at <https://www.who.int> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁷ Cameroon 2019, available at www.amnesty.org last accessed 20th March, 2026

⁸ Cameroon: Civilian Killed in Anglophone Regions, www.hrw.org/news last accessed 20th March, 2026.

⁹ Doctors without Borders ambulance fired in South West Cameroon, available at www.reliefweb.int, last accessed 20th March, 2026.

¹⁰ Article 22 of the Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986.

¹¹ Each Child Development-Child Rights, available at <https://www.who.int> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

¹² Child Rights and why they matter, available at <https://www.unicef.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

¹³ N. Peleg. (2019). *The Child's Right to Development*. Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.

¹⁴ C. Smart et al. (2001). *The Changing Experience of Childhood: Families and Divorce*. Polity Press, Cambridge University Press, 1.

6.5 The Right to Family

The family is recognized as the fundamental unit of society and the natural environment for growth and well-being of children as emphasised by the CRC. This is out rightly expressed in the preamble of the CRC. Children have the right to live with their families and be properly cared for. Family units create a safe and essential environment for the physical, emotional and social development of children. Although every child has the right to family, armed conflicts often results in family separation due to displacement of parents, death, or abduction.

6.6 The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

This right is guaranteed by Article 25 of the UDHR and Article 27 of the CRC. The right to an adequate standard of living requires at a minimum that everyone shall enjoy the necessary subsistence rights. It consists of adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing and the conditions necessary for the child's development. The essential point is people should be able to enjoy their basic needs in condition of dignity and peace. However, during armed conflicts, the right is greatly violated as livelihoods are destroyed, limited access to food, children as well as adult suffer from malnutrition and many are forced to flee their homes.

7. Forms of Exploitation in Armed Conflicts

Armed conflicts create conditions that facilitate the exploitation of children in various forms such as trafficking, unlawful use and recruitment of child soldiers, domestic servitude among others.

7.1 Child Trafficking

Child Trafficking is defined under the Palermo Protocol as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons under the age of 18 for the purpose of exploitation.¹ Unlike adult trafficking, the element of coercion or deception is not required for children; the mere of trafficking.² The use of illicit means such as violence, fraud, is irrelevant. Children are trafficked for purpose of exploitation.

7.2 Unlawful Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers

One of the most deplorable developments in recent years is the use of children as soldiers.³ The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is one of the most serious of exploitation. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict prohibits the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in hostilities. Children may be recruited by force or through so-called voluntary enlistment, often driven by poverty, coercion or a desire for protection or revenge. Perpetrators may be government armed forces, paramilitary organisations or rebel groups, though the latter are more likely to use child soldiers.⁴ Countless children have been taken from their homes or arbitrarily removed from the bushes where they had fled to. Child soldiers, who voluntarily decided to join in the struggle, did so out of excitement and pressures from families. For centuries children have been involved in military campaigns though they were not particularly effective as front-line fighters since most of the weapons were too heavy for them to carry.⁵

On Friday 24th July, 2020, armed separatist fighters under the leadership of self-acclaimed Field Marshall, (The Red Dragons), conducted an operation in a local market in the village of Essoh-Attah, in the Lebialem Division of the South West Region and forcefully rallied 80 boys to join the armed struggle as soldiers.⁶ On the said day, Field Marshall picked up these boys, stripped them naked in the market, poured water on them and rubbed mud on them while telling them to wave goodbye as they ran off to the bushes for war.

The reasons for the recruitment of child soldiers are often because they are more manageable, more obedient and easily manipulated than adults.⁷ They are also less likely to run away or demand for salaries. Children are also less conscious of danger, and it is harder for them to see the difference between 'absence' and 'death'. During an interview with an ex child soldier resident in Kumba, he revealed he voluntarily joined in the struggle because he wanted to revenge the death of his brother and the burning of their family house by the defense forces.⁸ He

¹ C. Beyrer. (2004). Global Child Trafficking. *The Lancet*, 364, 16-17.

² Human Trafficking-Doing business with man Goods, <https://www.humanium.org> last accessed 24th March, 2026.

³ Child Soldiers, available at <https://www.unicef.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁴ Child Soldiers, available at <https://theirworld.org> last accessed 24th February 2026.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ CHRDA, A Report on Atrocities Committed against Civilians by Armed Separatist Fighters between May and August 2020, available at www.chrda.org last accessed 24th March, 2026

⁷ Child Soldiers, available at <https://www.humanium.org> last accessed 24th March, 2026.

⁸ An interview with former child soldier in Kumba-Meme Division of the South West Region done on the 24th of March, 2026.

revealed before the crisis started he was enrolled in school (Form 3) but after their home was burnt down including 11 bags of cocoa, they were left with nothing. He revealed he had decided to surrender in 2019 after the Major National Dialogue was called.

In an interview with human rights personnel at the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa-Buea, he revealed the organisation had come across two child soldiers in Molyko-Buea who had escaped from Belo in the North West Region.¹ He revealed the children were of ages 15 and 17 and had joined the struggle because their caretaker who happened to be their elder sister's husband had been killed and burnt at his compound in Belo by alleged State armed forces. Out of frustration they were coerced to join the separatist fighters in order to revenge the death of their caretaker whom they considered as their father. They were equally brainwashed into believing the people from French Speaking Regions were out to kill them, consequently taking up weapons to retaliate.

On 5th October 2021, the International Teacher's Day, a video surfaced on social media depicting child soldiers of the Ambazonian Restoration Forces in Manyu and Akwaya Subdivision being trained for combat by their senior commanders.² The self-proclaimed terrorist group said they were the Alpha Immortal Base in Akwaya. Those children who were supposed to be going to school were rather on the fields training and practicing tactics with their guns. That was clear indication of children being brainwashed and indoctrinated. Slangs were being said such as 'All for one, one for all', 'No retreat no surrender', 'We are winning fatly', 'You can kill us but cannot kill the idea'.

On the 1st of October, 2021 which happened to be the day the Ambazonian forces celebrated their acclaimed independence, a disturbing footage surfaced the internet depicting child soldiers. 9 kids were seen in the North West Region singing the Ambazonian national anthem and practicing how to use weapons with sticks in their hands. The crowd kept hailing them for their performance. Questions that kept popping up were which parent in their right frame of mind will give their children away for that? Were they kidnapped or voluntarily gave up for the fight?

7.3 Organ Harvesting and Ritual Killings

Children are often killed for the purpose of organ removal. The global demand for transplantable organs continues to increase with the development of modern transplantation procedures and immunosuppressant drugs.³ The rise of scammers and occults in the country has increased the demand for human parts for their ritual sacrifices.⁴ Within the conflict, several children have been reported missing by their families. The human to be exploited is treated as a spare part that can be bought in the market in the same way as other item.⁵ Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs defines organ harvesting as any of the following activities;

I. Illicit removal of organs.

- The removal without free, informed and specific consent of the living donor or in case of the deceased donor, without the removal of organs being authorized under its domestic law.
- Where in exchange for the removal of organs, the living donor or third party has been offered or receive a financial gain of comparable advantage.

II. The use of illicitly removed organs.

III. The illicit solicitation or recruitment of donors or recipients or the offering or requesting of undue advantages.

IV. The preparation, preservation, storage, transportation, transfer, receipt, import and export of illicitly removed organs.

V. Aiding or abetting an attempt to illicitly remove.

On 17th March, 2017, a militant whose identity was concealed for security reasons, was arrested for murdering a child and mutilating her genitals.⁶ The said child was said to be an internally displaced person from the South

¹ An Interview with Mr Akem Kelvin Nkwain, Human Rights Coordinator, Centre for Human Rights and Development in Africa, done in Buea on May 23, 2021.

² Mimi Mefo News broadcast on Facebook, available at <https://www.mmn> last accessed 24th March, 2026.

³ B. Purkayastha, and N. Yousef. (2018). *Human Trafficking: Trade for Sex, Labour and Organs*. Wiley Publishers, United Kingdom.

⁴ An Interview with an Internally Displaced Parent who had lost her child done in Buea, on the 24th of April, 2021.

⁵ S. Scarpa. (2008). *Trafficking in Human Beings: Modern Slavery*. Oxford University Press, New York, 34.

⁶ Cameroon Concord News, "Douala CPDM Man Busted with 7 female genitals in his freezer", <https://www.cameroonconcordnews.com.douala> last accessed 10th January, 2026.

West Region of Cameroon. When further investigations were carried out, the defence and security forces discovered he was a member of a gang trafficking body parts. In his freezer was found 7 female genitals.¹

In July 2020, the lifeless body of a child said to have been used for rituals was found dumped in drainage at Bonapriso District, Douala.² The said victim was one from the South West Region.

7.4 Domestic Servitude

Domestic servitude is a form of forced labour but warrants its own category of slavery because of its unique context and challenges it presents.³ Article 1 of ILO Convention No. 189 defines domestic servitude as a specific type of forced labour which takes place in a private home.⁴ It is a form of trafficking in persons found in distinct circumstances as it is work done in a private residence that creates vulnerabilities for victims. Simply put, ILO defines domestic workers as persons who work in the homes of individuals providing services such as cooking, cleaning, babysitting, gardening or driving for remuneration. Domestic workers may be trapped in servitude through the use of force or coercion, such as physical or emotional abuse.

The Beijing Declaration (1995) explains violence takes three forms: verbal or psychological abuse (includes acts such as threats, constant shouting and insults), physical abuse (any form of violent act which can result in physical harm including beatings, kicking, hitting and spitting) and sexual violence (actual and attempted rape). Domestic workers unlike other type of workers experience all three forms of violence.⁵

- Domestic workers are subject to torture and sexual abuse from their masters.
- They are given little or no food and are forced to sleep in the same place with pets (cats, dogs).
- They are often forced to work for very long hours without sleep.
- Prevented from having means of communication with their relatives or friends so as not to lay out their experiences.

With the increase in the number of internally displaced persons in the country, population pressures have increased the vulnerability of children. Traffickers posing as middlemen lure parents on a daily basis to send their children to wealthy relatives or strangers to work as domestic servants.⁶

During an interview with a 13 years child, it was discovered her parents had sent her from Donga-Mantung Division to work as a nanny for a couple in Douala. She reported her parents had never left the village to the city before and she was excited she was going to Douala for her first time.⁷ Her parents could not afford to send her to secondary school and they resorted to sending her to work as a nanny under the agreement the couple would send her to learn a trade of her choice in the course of her work. Things did not go as intended and the victim got involved in several demanding roles, besides being a nanny. She was made to babysit, cook, clean the house and also hawk food items with little or no food. Her entire stay in Douala was tough as she was beaten on a regular basis. This is the situation of many children who have not had a means of escape or a way to speak up.

In an interview with a worker at the Central Police Station in Limbe, she revealed they had found two children from Small Massaka village in Mbonge stranded in Limbe, were victims of this form of exploitation.⁸ They were taken from the village to work as house helps in Douala and had lost their way in an attempt to go to Douala. The parents of the children were called upon during social inquiry by the Ministry of Social Affairs and it was discovered their parents were not aware of the exact places the children were living in. This is one of the many cases illustrating the use of children as domestic servants are prevalent in the Anglophone conflict.

7.5 Child Sexual Exploitation

In 2009, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Model Law against Trafficking in Persons

¹ *Ibid.*

² Money Rituals. Child Killed in Douala and Dumped in a drainage, available at www.coffeewithdillies.com last accessed 20th March, 2021.

³ <https://www.endslaverynow.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁴ Article 1 of ILO Convention 1930, No. 189.

⁵ Cameroon Postline, Cameroon Domestic Workers face awful working conditions, available at <https://www.cameroonpostline.com> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁶ D. Ndungana. (2018). Combatting Labour and Sex Trafficking in Cameroon. University of Applied Sciences, Published Undergraduate Thesis, 14.

⁷ Interview with a child of 13 years in Douala on 24^h March, 2026.

⁸ An Interview with a worker at the Limbe Central Police on August, 20th 2025.

defines sexual exploitation as the use of sexual services of others for financial or other benefits.¹ Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where offenders use their power (physical, financial or emotional) over a child or young person or a false identity to sexually or emotionally abuse them.² Trafficking of children especially girls for sexual exploitation is widespread and encompasses all patterns of trafficking. It often involves situations and relationships where young people receive something (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) in return for participating in sexual activities.³ Although most child sex abusers are local men, regions well known for tourism are also frequent destinations for children brought in to satisfy foreign tourist.⁴

Child Sex trafficking is often linked to domestic servitude as most of their employers take advantage of their vulnerability in the homes.⁵ Grooming acts for sexual exploitation include:

- Giving gifts or special attention to a child, or their parent or guardian, making the child feel special and/or indebted to an adult.
- Making close physical contact such as inappropriate tickling, play fighting and kissing.
- Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse that can be a precursor to physical sexual assault).
- Controlling a child or young person through threats, force or use of authority making the child fearful to report unwanted behavior.

Groomers may rely on mobile phones, social media and the internet to interact with children in inappropriate ways and will often ask the child to keep their relationship secret.

Child sexual exploitation prevailed prior to the conflicts plaguing the nation but has regrettably escalated with the outbreak of the conflicts. Following a 2018 report by Amnesty International, the Government of Cameroon had opened investigations into the allegations of soldiers and separatist fighters accused of keeping and raping teenage girls in the bushes.⁶ Rape had actually become a weapon of war used by separatist fighters to cause terror on the population. From personal observations, child sexual exploitation is common in towns like Buea and Douala. This is because many children have been displaced as a result of conflicts and many have been sent to live with other relatives who may not be able to take care of them like their parents would have normally done.⁷ During a documentary on Equinox Television in 2020, some girls who were said to be from the North West and South West Region were seen to have been victims of this form of exploitation, selling themselves for as low as 200 XAF just to be able to eat and pay their bills. Technology provides traffickers with unlimited access to children across the globe.

Transactional sex and survival sex has also become coping mechanisms used by displaced children in order to support their households. The internet has functioned in promoting child sex trafficking via recruitment, sale and purchase.⁸ In the North West Region, children hawking could be seen giving out themselves to potential buyers who promise purchasing all the items they sell.⁹ They do this just in order to be able to feed and buy their basic needs. Child pornography has become rampant with paedophiles exposing the nudity of their victims online.

Despite the fact that sexual relations with a girl below the age of 16 years in Cameroon is considered Statutory Rape,¹⁰ General Ayike who was one of the self-acclaimed Ambazonian separatist in Lebialem had abducted three young girls for this purpose. The Cameroonian Defence Forces raided his camp to hunt him down. The

¹ UNODC, Model Law against Trafficking in Persons (2009), <https://www.un.org> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

² Child Sexual Exploitation and Grooming, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au> last accessed 24th, 2026.

³ Unraveling the stages of grooming available at www.ncptf.org last accessed 20th February, 2026

⁴ International Labour Office, Unbearable to the Human Heart: Child Trafficking and action to eliminate it, <http://www.ilo.org/ipec> last accessed 25th August, 2020.

⁵ UN Women, Exploited Domestic Workers in Cameroon organise themselves to defend their rights, <https://www.unwomen.org>.

⁶ Kindzeka Moki, Study Abortions from Rapes on Rise in Cameroon's Conflict Zones, available at www.voa.com last accessed 20th March, 2021.

⁷ J. Sher. (2011). *Somebody's Daughter: The Hidden Story of America's Prostituted Children and the Battle to Save Them*. Chicago Review Press, Chicago.

⁸ C. Murray. (2019). Technology and Child Sex Trafficking: A Comparative Study of the United States, Venezuela and the Philippines, University of Texas Libraries, 17.

⁹ Multi-Sectoral Assessment in the North West: Shelter, Livelihood, Food Security and Hygiene Practices, Catholic Relief Services.

¹⁰ Cameroon Age and Consent and Statutory Rape, available at <https://www.ageofconsent.net/world> last accessed 26th August, 2020.

operation that led to his death at Besali, Wabane, led to the rescue of his three 'bush' wives. Two of them were children of 16 and 17 years who cried out they had been held in captivity against their wish.

7.6 Illegal Child Adoption

The high requests for adoption of babies in some wealthier countries, such as the United States, Canada, or some other European States or by couples within the country who are unable to conceive have led to trafficking of children. Adoption is legal in Cameroon when the right procedures are followed to adopt a child. Thus, adoption done with the right intention and legal procedure for giving the child a better life is not considered a problem. Unfortunately, the reality of our world is that children are abducted for this process without laid down procedures.

The ongoing conflicts have increased the number of children being taken up for adoption since most of them have not been registered on their birth certificate. Children are abducted from homes, orphanages, schools, parks and other places often without the consent of their parents or guardians.¹ Babies may equally be acquired through agents and in some cases the agents buy directly from families who may not want their children or may not be able to support them with a better life. In some cases, babies may be 'produced on order' from adolescents who see it as a way to earn money or the ones who had already been stuck into sex trafficking.

In 2018 in Buea, South West Region of Cameroon, a lady was caught in church (Ark of God Covenant Ministries under the patronage of Apostle John Chi) after stealing a baby.² She was caught in taxi trying to escape by a passenger who happened to have left church upon hearing that a baby was missing. The passenger insisted they must return to church for clarification to see if the baby the suspect was carrying was truly hers. She claimed she was from Kumba and came to church that day for prayers because the baby had been terribly sick. She kept on insisting that the baby was hers and after the crowd insisted she should show proof of parentage, she was left dumbfounded. She claimed the father of the baby was of late and so she could not reveal the name. She tried proving the baby was hers by suckling the baby with breast milk that was not flowing. The man of God requested to see defence forces and some elements of the Cameroon Army came to the scene. All circumstances revealed the lady was telling lies and she was arrested.

Under Cameroonian Law, the High Court must determine that the following four criteria have been met before issuing an adoption decree:³ That every person whose consent is necessary has consented to and understands the nature and effect of the adoption. Such consent is irrevocable and permanently severs all legal ties between the biological parents. They must ensure:⁴

- The welfare of the child will be improved upon adoption.
- The adoptive parents must provide proof of what they can provide for the child in a way that others cannot.
- No payment or reward has been the reason for the adoption.
- The prospective adoptive parent is healthy.

Illegal child adoption is often done void of these procedures and the intentions of the adoptive parents are usually for exploitation.

7.7 The Use of Children for Illegal Activities

Participation in criminal activities has been mentioned often as one of the things children are forced to carry out. They are made to perform a range of illegal activities which in turn generates astonishing profits for their exploiters.⁵ Children are used for the production of weapons (like local bombs) and the trade of illegal drugs. Most of them are equally forced to act as drugs couriers or as decoys for adult drug dealers. They are also involved in petty crime that may include pickpocketing, bag snatching and counterfeit money/goods, or forced begging. They may get involved in illicit activities against their will or they may be made to believe that being

¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 'Tackling Illegal Adoptions and addressing the rights of victims' available at <https://www.ochchr.org> last accessed 24th August, 2020.

² Live Service at Ark of God Covenant Ministries, Buea, South West Region of Cameroon on November 11, 2018.

³ How to Adopt from Cameroon, available at <https://adoption.com> last accessed 24th March 2026.

⁴ Procedure for Child Adoption in Cameroon, Kinsman Advocates Law Firm, <https://www.kinsmenadvocates.services> last accessed 24th March, 2026.

⁵ Child Trafficking for exploitation in forced criminal activities and forced begging, available at <https://www.interpol.int> last accessed 25th August, 2020.

involved in it will give them status and money.¹ A child in Bamenda for example was apprehended because he was specialized in stealing motor bikes and selling them at a cheaper price.² Upon investigation it was discovered he was being sent to do so regularly by a self-acclaimed Ambazonia fighter popularly known as General 'Big Number'. This form of exploitation not only violates children's rights but also exposes them to criminal liability and long term social marginalization.

8. Impacts of Conflicts on Children

While all sides may commit atrocities in armed conflicts, children are the least responsible, yet suffer the most harm.³ Conflicts take a toll on children's physical, social, and mental health. These impacts are felt either immediately or experienced in the long-run.

8.1 Loss of Lives and Physical Injuries

One of the most severe consequences of armed conflicts on children is the loss of life and the infliction of physical injuries. Children are frequently being exposed to indiscriminate attacks, crossfire and excessive use of force by both state and non-state actors. In January 2026, at least 8 children were killed in a deadly attack by armed men in North West, pointing to the ongoing insecurity in the region.⁴

On February 14, 2020, government forces and armed ethnic Fulani massacred at least 21 civilians, including 13 children and a pregnant woman, in Ngarbuh in North West Region.⁵ The Ngarbuh massacre that resulted in several deaths illustrates the devastating violation of the right to life.

Similarly, on 14th October, 2021, a Gendarme officer on duty at Molyko-Bwitingi check point, South West Region, had shot at a woman driving a car with her daughter in it. Reportedly the woman was summoned to stop her moving vehicle but refused to do so because she was running late to drop her daughter at school. The shot fired at her vehicle led to the killing of her five year old child Enondiale Tchuengia Carolouise who was a class one pupil at the Catholic University Institute Academy of Talents Primary School (CUIB A & T).⁶ While the death of Carolouise was still a shock to many civilians, another incident happened in Bamenda-North West on 12th November, 2021 at about 12:30.⁷ Tataw Brandy a child of 7 years was killed through a bullet released by a Police officer. He had fired shots at a vehicle which had attempted to escape their police checkpoint and unfortunately the stray bullet had killed the little girl who was on her way back from school.

In September, 2021, the wife of a Presbyterian pastor reportedly poured hot water on their house help who she accused of allegedly stealing her 90,000 FRS.⁸ Reverend Angono Emmanuel and wife, both from the North West Region of Cameroon, were accused of constantly maltreating their house help. The child was said to be living with them as a result of the crisis that had disrupted her education. They were arrested after neighbours were alarmed and the victim was taken to the hospital where she received immediate medical attention.

8.2 Disruption of Education

In times of conflict, children's education is affected by the closures or destruction of schools, teachers being frightened and fleeing insecurity. Many schools have been forced to close due to violence and constant threats from separatists. There is a shift from formal education disrupted in most communities, many children are turning to informal education setting or learning from home which is not as effective as classroom monitoring.

In October 2020, unidentified gun men attacked the Mother Francisca International Bilingual School in Kumba-South West Region, killing 7 children and injuring 13.⁹ This is seen as a form of exploitation as the perpetrators are using it as bait to pressure governments in to meeting their demands.

¹ 'Please Save my Life.' A Bomb Specialist Defuses Explosives Strapped to Children available at www.wsj.com last accessed 24th February, 2026.

² Ambazonia Fighters in Bamenda apprehend a boy specialized in stealing bikes, www.cameroonnewsagency.com last accessed 3rd June, 2021.

³ A. Twohig et al. (2026). The Impact of armed conflict on children: A global humanitarian crisis. *J Psychol Med*.

⁴ Cameroon in shock after suspected separatist attack, <https://www.google.com/amp.dw.com> last accessed 24th February, 2026.

⁵ Cameroon Massacre Findings made Public available at www.hrw.org last accessed 20th February, 2026.

⁶ Cameroon: The Disproportionate use of force leads to the killing of a five years old girl in Buea-South West Region, available at chrda.org/Cameroon last accessed 20th February, 2026.

⁷ Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: PCC Statement on the killing of a 7 year old child by a Police officer in Bamenda, available at www.hrlcr.org last accessed 20th February, 2026.

⁸ Live video on Egbe Mawoh's Blog, 20th February, 2026.

⁹ Cameroon sees more attacks on Schools, <https://www.voanews.com> last accessed 20th February, 2026.

On 30th January, 2020 separatist kidnapped a 17-year-old secondary school student in Buea, South West Region, and chopped off her finger with a machete for going to school.¹ The girl was released three days later following a ransom payment. On 4th November, 2020, the Suspected Anglophone separatist attacked Kulu Memorial College, a school in Limbe, South West Region.² They assaulted students, stripped them naked and drove them out of school so as to create an atmosphere of panic to prevent the children from going to school.

8.3 Disruption of Social Development

The armed conflict has disrupted the social structures meant for the full development of a child. Orphaned or separated children in times of conflict often lack stable caregivers. Children are often rotating from the hands of one family member to another. This limits their ability to learn and grow in familiar environments.

8.4 Malnutrition/Illness

Conflicts often lead to food insecurity, poor living conditions and inadequate access to clean water and health services. These conditions contribute to malnutrition and increased susceptibility to disease among children.

8.5 Psychological Trauma

Conflicts have severe impacts on the mental and emotional health of children. Children exposed to horrific war experiences are often left with enduring impacts like post-traumatic stress disorders (nightmares, flashbacks). Children suffer loneliness and depression from the loss of parents, relatives, friends and their homes; triggering prolonged sadness and fear.

9. Challenges Faced in the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts

The protection of children in armed conflicts is hindered by several challenges. One of the major challenges is the weak enforcement of legal frameworks. Despite the fact that international human rights law and international humanitarian law provide a good framework for child protection in conflicts, the implementation remains weak. During conflicts, the state often prioritises security and military objectives over child protection. Violations often go unpunished, thereby fostering a culture of impunity among State and non-State actors.

State institutions responsible for child protection often lack adequate financial resources, trained personnel and logistical support to fully carry out projects.

The persistence of violence in affected regions severely limits access to vulnerable populations. This insecurity hampers the delivery of humanitarian assistance and restricts monitoring efforts.

The conflict has equally resulted to large-scale internal displacements and breakdown of family units. Children separated from their families and unaccompanied continue to be the most hit in the conflict.

Corruption undermines enforcement efforts as resources meant for protection and humanitarian aids are often misappropriated or diverted for personal gains.

10. Conclusion

Armed conflicts across the world today continue to have devastating consequences on the physical, mental, and social well-being of children. The destruction of homes, schools, healthcare systems and community structures undermines the conditions necessary for their survival and development. The Anglophone conflict clearly illustrates how prolonged violence, displacement and institutional breakdown have resulted in widespread violations of children's rights. Although international human rights law and international humanitarian law provide a good legal framework for the protection of children in armed conflicts, the reality on the ground reveals a persistent gap between legal norms and their effective implementation. It is against this backdrop that the study makes certain recommendations.

11. Recommendations

The Government of Cameroon should intensify efforts to investigate and prosecute grave violations against children committed by both State actors and non-State actors.

The Government should ensure that all funds released are properly audited and publicly accounted for in order to limit underfunding and misappropriation of funds.

Child protection measures should be systematically integrated into all peace building, humanitarian and security responses related to the Anglophone conflict.

Schools and healthcare facilities must be designated and effectively maintained as safe zones. The Government

¹ Cameroon Events of 2020, www.hrw.org/worldd last accessed 20th March, 2026.

² Cameroon: Gunmen attack school in Limbe (South West Region) November 4, available at www.garda.com last accessed 20th March, 2026.

should ensure the full implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and adopt concrete measures to prevent attacks on pupils/students and these institutions.

There is critical need to establish and strengthen psychosocial support services, trauma healing programs, family tracing mechanisms and rehabilitation/reintegration programs for children affected by the conflict.

Moreover, there is a need for intensified human rights and international humanitarian law training for security personnel, local authorities, community leaders and relevant actors.

The study equally recommends that social protection can be enhanced by providing livelihood support for vulnerable households to reduce the economic pressures that expose children to street life.

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Adapting Chinese Live Commerce Model to the United States Beauty and Fashion Industry: Strategic Insights into Cross-Border Expansion of a TikTok Live Award-Winning Practitioner

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Abstract

Over the past few years, Chinese live commerce has undergone a paradigm shift from being traffic-dividend-driven to fine-grained operations-driven. This shift has consolidated transferable core capabilities, including dual-wheel-driven content scenarios and shelf scenarios, data-driven product selection decisions, and flexible supply chain responsiveness. The US TikTok e-commerce market is currently in a phase of rapid growth. The beauty and fashion category, characterized by strong visual expressiveness, obvious impulsive purchasing attributes, and large profit margins, has become a key strategic sector for Chinese cross-border sellers to lay out. Taking the cross-border practice of New Start Plus Agency as a sample, this paper analyzes the differences between Chinese and US live commerce across traffic ecosystems, user behaviors, and conversion logistics. It proposes growth paths for the beauty and fashion category spanning product selection adaptation, content localization, and supply chain responsiveness. Furthermore, it discusses the scale expansion planning and organizational support strategies for growing from 2 to 6 live studios, providing strategic references for the globalization of Chinese cross-border live commerce.

Keywords: live commerce, cross-border trade, TikTok E-commerce

1. Introduction

With its content-driven, real-time interactive sales model, Chinese live commerce has profoundly altered the operational logic of the retail industry. As the market scale reaches trillions of yuan, leading enterprises have begun looking overseas to find new growth opportunities. The rapid development of US TikTok e-commerce has opened a digital gateway to the North American consumer market for Chinese cross-border sellers. The content ecosystem combining short videos with livestreaming, the algorithm-driven traffic distribution mechanism, and a competitive landscape still in its nurturing stage provide a natural breeding ground for the migration of Chinese live commerce experience. Since its inception, New Start Plus Agency has focused on beauty and fashion categories—such as wigs, hair bundles, false eyelashes, and women’s bags—targeting the North American female consumer market. It has progressively established a comprehensive operational system covering team management, livestreaming workflows, ad placement, and short-video content marketing. Currently, the livestreaming channel GMV has surpassed \$10 million, with a total transaction volume of \$30 million across all TikTok shops on the platform. Based on the cross-border practices of New Start Plus Agency, this paper systematically researches the key strategies for migrating China’s live commerce model to the US beauty and fashion industry.

2. Comparative Analysis of Chinese and US Live Commerce Strategies

2.1 Differences in Traffic Ecosystems and Content Distribution Logic

The Chinese live commerce traffic ecosystem is dominated by three major platforms: Douyin, Kuaishou, and Taobao Live, each with distinct traffic distribution mechanisms. Douyin relies heavily on content recommendation algorithms, meaning live studio traffic depends largely on short-video traffic redirection and real-time interaction metrics. Conversely, the US TikTok e-commerce ecosystem uses short videos as its traffic entry point, as live commerce is still in the stage of user education. The platform's algorithm heavily weights content recommendation; the correlation between follower counts and live studio traffic is weaker than in China, allowing high-quality content from small-and-medium accounts to gain massive exposure. Additionally, users trust creator recommendations and user reviews much more than brand-hosted livestreams, meaning brand trust takes longer to build. During its US operations, New Start Plus Agency discovered that short-video content carries significantly more weight in driving traffic and conversion than on domestic platforms. A substantial portion of the live studio audience is redirected from short videos, making continuous investment in content quality and posting frequency vital to maintaining stable traffic.

2.2 Differences in User Consumer Behavior and Conversion Paths

Chinese live commerce users have developed mature habits of content-based product seeding and live shopping. Real-time interaction and limited-time promotions in live studios strongly catalyze purchasing decisions. In contrast, US TikTok e-commerce users' consumer behavior is closer to discovery-based shopping driven by content; they develop a desire to learn about and purchase a product after being captivated by short-video content, rather than entering a live studio with a clear purchasing goal. Regarding the conversion path, Chinese users have a relatively short decision-making chain from viewing content to placing an order. Limited-time discounts and scarcity signals ("inventory running out") are highly persuasive for hesitant users. US users, however, have longer decision-making chains, demanding more information about product quality and real-world efficacy. They are generally less receptive to aggressive, hard-sell promotional livestreaming styles. Consequently, New Start Plus Agency adjusted its verbal strategy in live studios by softening promotions, extending product detail demonstrations, and explaining usage scenarios in-depth, which successfully boosted user retention and interaction rates.

2.3 Differences in Supply Chain Response and Fulfillment Capabilities

Chinese live commerce is backed by a mature domestic supply chain. The small-buffer, quick-response model dramatically shortens the cycle from design to shipment for trending products, and the return process is relatively simple. For cross-border live commerce, the supply chain is far more complex. Products traveling from domestic factories to US consumers must undergo cross-border logistics, destination customs clearance, and last-mile delivery, typically requiring several days or more. Beauty and fashion products like wigs and eyelashes have high requirements for delivery speed and packaging integrity. New Start Plus Agency optimized logistical efficiency by combining overseas warehousing prep with direct shipping from China. Hot-selling and evergreen items are stocked in advance in US warehouses, while new and test items are fulfilled directly from China. Consequently, delivery times for orders shipped from overseas warehouses have been reduced to within a few days, steadily narrowing the fulfillment gap compared to local sellers.

3. GMV Growth Paths for the Beauty and Fashion Category

3.1 Category Selection Logic and Hero Product Portfolio Strategies

The core competitiveness of the beauty and fashion category in live commerce lies in its visual impact and capacity to trigger impulse buying. New Start Plus Agency selected high-frequency, high-margin products like wigs, hair bundles, false eyelashes, and women's bags. Wigs and hair bundles are marketed for their style variety and ease of wear; false eyelashes differentiate through natural simulated effects and reusability; and women's bags enter the market with a focus on stylish design and cost-effectiveness.

The portfolio strategy employs a hero products driving auxiliary products model. Hero products, characterized by high cost-effectiveness and high conversion rates, handle primary traffic conversion in the live studio. Auxiliary products, featuring high profit margins and differentiated designs, work to increase the Average Order Value (AOV) and overall profit margins. New Start Plus Agency's experience demonstrates that the ratio of hero-to-auxiliary products in the live studio's product structure plays a critical role in balancing single-session GMV and gross margins.

New Start Plus Agency established a product matrix covering different price points and styles for each core category: wigs are segmented into rich product combinations based on material, length, color, and hairstyle; false eyelashes are structured into tiered product lines based on volume, curl, band type, and application scenarios. This robust matrix allows live studios to flexibly pivot their marketing focus across different sales nodes and target demographics. To filter hero products, the company established a three-stage selection process: short-video testing, live studio promotion, and data review. The short-video testing stage evaluates user interest based on views, completion rates, and engagement across multiple product demonstration videos. The live studio

promotion stage validates hero potential using actual sales conversion data. The data review stage scores individual products comprehensively on click-through-rate (CTR), payment conversion rate, and return rate to determine whether they join the long-term hero list.

3.2 Dual-Wheel Traffic Acquisition: Short Videos and Livestreaming

In the US TikTok e-commerce ecosystem, short-video content serves the dual purpose of building brand awareness and pooling traffic. New Start Plus Agency assembled a professional production team to create authentic, lifestyle-oriented short videos tailored to the aesthetic tastes and content habits of US female users. Wigs are marketed for their real-person try-ons and hairstyle transformation comparisons; false eyelashes focus on before-and-after makeup differences and application tutorials. The visual style uses natural lighting and minimal beauty filters, avoiding professional studio setups to match US users' preference for authenticity.

Within the live studio traffic mix, the proportion of traffic redirected from short videos has risen steadily, making the hit rate of short videos a decisive factor for overall live traffic. Rather than a simple chronological sequence, short videos and livestreams are dynamically linked throughout the entire broadcast cycle. Pre-live teaser short videos showcase core hero products and limited-time benefits to prompt users to reserve the livestream or set reminders. In-live product explanations and highlight moments are clipped in real-time and published immediately, pushing live-broadcast signals to potential users' recommendation feeds. Post-live highlight reels are polished and redistributed to build a follower base for the next session. New Start Plus Agency's content team categorizes videos into unboxing reviews, tutorials, side-by-side comparisons, and user feedback, using a diverse content mix to sustain user interest and freshness.

3.3 User Operations and Retention Frameworks

Due to the high-repurchase nature of beauty and fashion products, user operations and customer retention systems are essential drivers of sustained GMV growth. New Start Plus Agency prioritizes membership systems in its TikTok Shop operations, incentivizing long-term store relationships through follow-to-discount coupons and loyalty points. Fan retention in the live studio focuses on the host's personal charisma and expertise, with hosts answering product usage questions and offering style pairing tips live.

Private-domain retention is key to extending Customer Lifetime Value (LTV). Email marketing and social media groups are used to share new product arrivals and exclusive discounts, guiding loyal customers back to the live studio and shop. New Start Plus Agency established a user segmentation system based on purchase frequency and monetary value, dividing users into four tiers: new customers, active customers, dormant customers, and churned customers. New customers are automatically sent post-purchase care emails containing tutorials and styling tips after their first order. Active customers receive regular invitations for early-access product trials and exclusive member discount codes. Dormant customers are automatically sent "welcome back" coupons and seasonal best-seller recommendations after a period of inactivity. Churned customers are targeted with high-value hero items and steep, limited-time discounts to attempt reactivation.

4. Scale Expansion Planning for Live Studios

4.1 Path and Rhythm of Expanding from 2 to 6 Live Studios

New Start Plus Agency currently operates 2 live studios, focusing on "wigs & hair bundles" and "false eyelashes & women's bags," respectively. Each has established stable host teams and operational workflows. The expansion from 2 to 6 studios is structured around category expansion and time-slot coverage.

New studios will cover untapped niches such as hair accessories, nail supplies, and men's wigs. Time-slot coverage will expand to include morning and late-night slots, targeting various time zones and lifestyle routines to maximize studio space utilization and daily broadcast hours.

The expansion rhythm is phased: Phase I adds two new category studios (hair accessories and nail supplies) to reuse existing operations teams and supply chain resources, lowering initial trial-and-error costs. Phase II selects the two top-performing categories based on performance data to create a primary-secondary co-operating studio layout, and launches an independent studio for men's wigs. Decisions to advance to the next phase are gated by whether key metrics—such as average single-session GMV, gross margin, and team maturity—reach pre-set expansion thresholds.

4.2 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Talent Replication

Scaling up live studios requires highly standardized operational workflows and talent replication capabilities. New Start Plus Agency broke down each livestreaming session into four phases: pre-live selection and content teasers, in-live host script and floor control coordination, and post-live data review and after-sales handling. Each phase has detailed checklists and quality standards.

The host training system uses a tiered development model. New hosts start as co-hosts or floor managers to

master product knowledge and script techniques before broadcasting independently, while senior hosts act as mentors and develop training courses. Implementing standard procedures and training systems shortened the setup time for new live studios from months to weeks.

Checklists detail tasks, execution order, quality benchmarks, and deadlines. For example, the pre-live selection checklist specifies the minimum number of products to upload and the required ratio of hero-to-auxiliary items. The floor manager's manual outlines exact triggers and workflows for releasing coupons and adjusting inventory. The host training system uses clear promotion criteria: hosts must meet specific performance baselines in single-session GMV, user retention, and engagement rates before applying for promotion to host in higher-tier live studios.

4.3 Multi-Studio Collaborative Ad Campaigns and Traffic Allocation

Operating multiple live studios in parallel requires an efficient ad deployment and traffic allocation mechanism. New Start Plus Agency utilizes a unified ad account architecture to collaboratively manage campaigns across multiple studios, tailoring strategies to each studio's category positioning and target audience.

A collaborative cross-redirection effect exists among studios; hosts recommend related products from sister studios based on real-time viewer inquiries, achieving cross-conversion. The unified account pools ad budgets, allowing the media buying team to dynamically adjust budget allocations based on real-time conversions and traffic competition. High-converting studios receive instant budget tilts, preventing the efficiency losses associated with rigid, fixed budgets.

Additionally, a cross-recommendation system tracks user category preferences and purchase histories. When a user buys from one category studio, the system gauges their potential interest in related categories and pushes tailored recommendations, steadily boosting traffic and conversion rates for sister studios. This collaborative traffic allocation mechanism lowers customer acquisition costs (CAC) for individual studios while maximizing overall user LTV.

5. Strategic Support Systems for Cross-Border Expansion

5.1 Cross-Border Supply Chain and Overseas Warehousing Layouts

Fulfillment efficiency in cross-border live commerce is a critical factor influencing user experience and retention rates. New Start Plus Agency utilizes a strategy of overseas warehouse pre-stocking paired with flexible domestic replenishment. High-selling, evergreen items are pre-stocked in US warehouses for local delivery, while new and test items are shipped directly from China.

Overseas warehouse selection balances shipping times, warehousing costs, and return processing efficiency, integrating return handling directly into the warehouse management system. On the domestic supply chain side, long-term partnerships with core suppliers were established to compress the R&D and production cycles for new products.

The overseas inventory management system is synchronized with real-time live sales data. If a hot-selling product's sales exceed forecasts during a broadcast, the system automatically triggers an inventory alert and issues an emergency replenishment order to the domestic supply chain. Returned products are categorized at the overseas warehouse following quality inspections: undamaged items with intact packaging are restocked immediately; items with damaged packaging but intact products are repackaged for resale; and used or damaged products are redirected to discount channels or liquidated.

Domestic suppliers collaborate by pre-purchasing raw materials. Core suppliers prepare common raw materials in advance based on quarterly forecasts provided by New Start Plus Agency, shortening the cycle from prototyping to mass production and reducing response times for standard replenishment orders from weeks to days.

5.2 Cross-Cultural Team Building and Localized Operations

Localized operations in the US market require a cross-cultural team structure. New Start Plus Agency adopted a two-tier organizational structure consisting of Chinese core backbones and US local talents. Chinese backbones transfer proven operational methodologies to the US team, while US local talents handle culturally sensitive tasks such as content creation, live hosting, and customer service.

The Chinese and US teams share unified data dashboards and conduct weekly review meetings. Standardized SOPs and video training courses allow new US employees to quickly master standard operational procedures. Chinese core backbones travel to the US regularly for on-site guidance and training, while key US members visit the Chinese headquarters to participate in intensive training and witness domestic livestreaming workflows firsthand.

Recruiting for the localized host team prioritizes diversity in race and hair types to meet product demonstration

needs. By hiring models and creators from varied racial backgrounds and hair types, the company ensures that live product demonstrations accurately address the real-world scenarios of diverse US consumer groups.

5.3 Data-Driven Decision Systems and Strategic Iterations

A robust data decision system serves as the foundational infrastructure for scaled live commerce operations. New Start Plus Agency built an end-to-end data monitoring system capturing short-video metrics, live performance data, product sales, and user behavior, automatically compiling these metrics into multi-dimensional daily reports.

Data analysis continuously refines operational workflows: product data guides selection adjustments, while user behavior data shapes content creation. This growing data-driven capability marks the MCN's transition from experience-driven management to systematic, scientific operations.

The data framework translates subjective operational intuition into quantifiable, traceable, and replicable decision rules. For example, a senior operator's product intuition is broken down into feature tags and data thresholds for high-converting products, enabling new employees to make preliminary selection decisions. The data dashboard features tiered permissions and customized views: the founder level focuses on high-level trends like all-category GMV, gross margins, and cash flow; the category manager level focuses on operational funnels and inventory turnover; the host and floor level focuses on real-time engagement and minute-by-minute transaction curves.

6. Conclusion

The cross-border migration of the Chinese live commerce model to the US beauty and fashion industry is essentially a strategic practice of localizing proven domestic methodologies within a cross-cultural business environment. While Chinese and US live commerce differ in traffic ecosystems, user behaviors, and supply chain efficiencies, Chinese enterprises have accumulated highly transferable underlying capabilities in content operations, data-driven decision-making, and team management.

The practices of New Start Plus Agency demonstrate that targeting high-margin, high-repurchase categories like beauty and fashion, building a dual-wheel traffic acquisition system driven by short videos and livestreams, establishing standardized SOPs and talent replication systems, and deploying overseas warehousing are highly effective strategic paths for cross-border live commerce to scale. In the context of rapidly developing global digital trade, the cross-border expansion of Chinese live commerce companies offers a valuable practical blueprint for digital innovation in international trade.

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A Legal Assessment of the Effects of the Conflict in the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon on Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Sustainable development, as crystallized in major international legal and policy instruments, is contingent upon the coexistence of economic advancement, social justice, environmental protection, peace, and institutional stability. Despite the measures put in place for the promotion of sustainable development in Cameroon, the protracted Anglophone conflict has gravely affected the practical efficacy of these mechanisms. The crisis has led to widespread destruction of social infrastructure, aggravated poverty, displacement, and human rights violations, disrupted access to education and healthcare, and occasioned serious violations of fundamental human rights. These consequences are incompatible with the essential preconditions for sustainable development and have rendered its attainment in the affected regions ineffective. Although the State has adopted various initiatives, including the Grand National Dialogue, special status arrangements, reconstruction programs, and DDR mechanisms, these responses have not yielded a sufficiently coherent, inclusive, and enforceable framework capable of addressing the root causes of the crisis and restoring the conditions necessary for sustainable recovery. The study concludes that sustainable development in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon will remain more theoretical than real unless peacebuilding, accountability, human rights protection is treated as indispensable components of the development process. It therefore advocates a more rights-based, conflict-sensitive, and justice-oriented legal approach as the necessary foundation for meaningful and enduring sustainability in the affected regions.

1. Background

Sustainable development has become a fundamental strategy to guide the world's social economic and environmental transformation.¹ The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm was the first world conference to make the environment a major issue. The participants adopted a series of principles for sound management of the environment including the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment and several resolutions. Principle 1 and 8 affirms that "Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality, and the enjoyment of adequate living conditions, in an environment of such quality as to enable him to lead a dignified life and enjoy well-being and has a solemn obligation to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations."² The Earth's natural resources must be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as

¹ Shi Longyu, Linwei Han, Fengmei Yang, and Lijie Gao. (2019). The Evolution of Sustainable Development Theory: Types, Goals, and Research Prospects. *Sustainability*, 11(24), 7158, 1-16, 1.

² United Nations, Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Declaration), 1972, Principle 1 and 8, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/stockholm1972> (Accessed 14th May 2025).

appropriate.¹

The concept of sustainable development gained significant attention following the publication of the Brundtland Report. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which was established in 1983, released a report titled “Our Common Future.” This document became widely known as the “Brundtland Report,” named after the Commission’s chairperson, Gro Harlem Brundtland. It developed guiding principles for sustainable development as it is generally understood today. The Brundtland Report defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs.²

The Earth Summit which convened in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from June 3 to 14, 1992, stands as a landmark event in the trajectory of sustainable development. The Rio Summit aimed to create a blueprint for international cooperation on environment and development, which emphasized the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental factors.³ The participating world leaders signed five major instruments: The Rio Declaration and its 27 universal principles (a statement of principles); Agenda 21 (a framework for activity into the 21st century addressing the combined issues of environment protections and fair and equitable development for all, and includes the creation of a new Commission for Sustainable Development); The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the Convention on Biological Diversity; and the Declaration on the principles of forest management.⁴ The principles established at the Earth Summit provided a framework for subsequent global initiatives, paving the way for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, later, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁵

In September 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit, the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Declaration, which called for a global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, was the first ever global strategy with quantifiable targets to be agreed upon by all UN member states and the world’s leading development institutions.⁶ To support the Declaration, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan established eight accompanying objectives. These objectives were set with a deadline of 2015 and became known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They include the following: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equality and empower women; Reduce child mortality; Improve maternal health; Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.⁷

As the MDGs expire at the end of 2015, the U.N. General Assembly adopted their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”), in September 2015.⁸

After Cameroon gained its independence, numerous attempts have been made towards achieving sustainability. These efforts have evolved alongside the country’s political, economic, and social development priorities, reflecting an increasing awareness of the need to balance natural resource exploitation with environmental protection. In the immediate post-independence period, development policies were extractive in orientation, driven by the imperatives of economic growth, state-building, and national consolidation. Environmental considerations, where they existed, were fragmented and largely embedded within sector-specific regulations rather than articulated as a coherent legal or policy objective.⁹

Despite the fact that Cameroon is striving towards attaining sustainable development, that endeavour has been

¹ *Ibid* Principle 2.

² United Nations. (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future.

³ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992>. (Accessed 6th April, 2025).

⁴ European Environment Agency, Earth Summit Rio de Janeiro. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/help/glossary/chm-biodiversity/earth-summit-rio-de-janeiro> (Accessed 6th August 2025).

⁵ Library of Congress, The Rio Earth Summit. (1992). <https://guides.loc.gov/brazil-us-relations/rio-earth-summit-1992>. (Accessed 6th April, 2025).

⁶ McArthur John. (2014). The Origins of the Millennium Development Goals. *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 34(2), 5-24.

⁷ Fehling Maya, Brett D. Nelson, and Sridhar Venkatapuram. (2013). Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: A Literature Review. *Global Public Health*, 8(10), 1109-1122.

⁸ G.A. Res. 70/1, U.N. Sustainable Development Goals Sept. 25, 2015.

⁹ Maurice Kamto, *Droit de L'Environnement en Afrique* (Paris: EDICEF (Éditions Didier Érudition France) and AUPELF-UREF (Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française - Université des Réseaux d'Expression Française), 1996), 21-24.

undermined by the conflict which is ongoing in the English Speaking Region of the country. The surge of armed conflict in the Anglophone region of Cameroon¹ broke out in October 2017 after separatist groups unilaterally announced their secession from the Francophone government in Yaoundé and the formation of a separate state in the Anglophone region.² The call for independence by separatist groups followed widespread demonstrations throughout 2016 by civil society organizations, demanding an end to economic, political and cultural discrimination that they felt was being imposed by the government in Yaoundé against the Anglophone region.³ Armed violence in this region escalated after October 2017, when state forces cracked down on those they perceived as secessionists, resulting in several deaths and hundreds of arrests.⁴

2. The State of Sustainable Development Prior to the Armed Conflict in Anglophone Cameroon

An appraisal of sustainable development in Anglophone Cameroon prior to the outbreak of the armed conflict necessarily engages the core pillars of sustainability including economic viability, social equity, environmental protection, and infrastructural development within Cameroon.

2.1 Economic Sustainability

Prior to the outbreak of the Anglophone armed conflict in 2016, the North-West and South-West Regions occupied a strategically important place within Cameroon's productive economy. In this sense, the pre-crisis period cannot be described simply as one of prosperity; rather, it was a period in which economic sustainability existed, but in an incomplete form.⁵ Prior to the conflict, the state-run CDC was an important revenue stream for the government. The corporation generated 58.39 billion francs CFA (approximately US\$101.8 million) from produce sales in 2016.⁶ The CDC not only contributed significantly to national export earnings but also sustained local economies through direct employment, out-grower schemes, and the provision of social amenities such as worker housing, healthcare facilities, and schools. Before the outbreak of the conflict, CDC's workforce stood at 20,595 persons. But as of 31 December 2021, this number had dropped to 15,505 workers, with about 50% of the manpower on unpaid 'technical leave'.⁷ Complementing this were other agro-industrial enterprises such as PAMOL Plantations Plc and Del Monte Cameroon, which further enhanced the anglophone region's position in global markets, particularly in bananas and palm products.

This agro-industrial dynamism was also seen in the thriving smallholder agricultural sector, particularly in the North-West Region. The region was made up of diverse agricultural production systems, with farmers cultivating both subsistence and cash crops, including maize, beans, Irish potatoes, vegetables, and coffee.⁸ The North-West Region, often described as Cameroon's "breadbasket," played an important role in ensuring national food security, supplying urban markets across the country with foodstuffs.⁹ In addition, the region's well-developed livestock sector, particularly cattle rearing, contributed to the domestic meat supply and supported a wide network of economic activities, including dairy production, butchery, and transportation.¹⁰ Notwithstanding these strengths, a wider examination reveals a plethora of issues affecting Anglophone regions and the nation at large. The IMF's 2015 Article IV Consultation reported that Cameroon's growth was broad-based and projected

¹ Given the nature of the dispute, many ways to refer to the region invoke support of a particular group. Referring to Northwest and Southwest regions implies territorial integrity with the government in Yaoundé, while referring to Ambazonia, Southern Cameroons or Ambaland implies support for pro-independence groups. Recognizing these linguistic connotations, this research refers to the Anglophone Cameroon or the Anglophone region as such, and its subnational regions as Northwest and Southwest to avoid more polarizing terminology.

² Nshom, Elvis, Immaculate Mkong, Kwoh Elong, and Isidore Agha. (2024). Independence or a Federation? Perceived Discrimination as an Antecedent of Anglophone Cameroonians' Attitude Towards the Form Of State. *Ethnicities*, 24(3), 340-358.

³ International Crisis Group, Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/250-camerouns-anglophone-crisis-crossroads>. (Accessed 8th July, 2025).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Konings, P. (1999). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37(3), pp. 511–530.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Kibebsii, N.M., Angwafo, T.E. and Egwu, B.M.J. (2025). Addressing Sustainability Strategies and Agricultural Productivity: Farmers Based Evidence in Tubah Sub-Division North West Region, Cameroon. *Journal of Agricultural Chemistry and Environment*, 14, 37-55.

⁹ Yengoh, G.T. and Ardö, J. (2013). Crop Yield Gaps in Cameroon. *Ambio*, 43, 175-190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

real GDP growth at 5.9% in 2015.¹ The average growth over the strategy period was about 4.6%, while underemployment rose from 75.8% in 2005 to 77% in 2015. The same review notes that the poverty rate stood at 37.5% in 2014, and increased to 44% in 2015.² These figures show that pre-crisis Cameroon was experiencing growth without sufficient inclusion. For Anglophone Cameroon, this meant that even in regions that were agriculturally productive and commercially dynamic, many households remained economically insecure.

2.2 Social Development

Before the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, the North-West and South-West Regions were not social deserts. On the contrary, they contained a plethora of educational, health and community-service institutions. This signified measurable progress in the social dimension of development. In the South-West Region, for example, the Buea Communal Development Plan identified the presence of the Regional Hospital Annex in Buea, the District Health Office, and eleven integrated health centres located in places such as Bojongo, Likombe, Bova, Bokwaongo, Buea Town, Muea, Bonakanda, Bokova, Lysoka, Mile 16 and Molyko.³

Again, prior to the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, the North West and South West regions of Cameroon benefitted from a historically entrenched Anglo-Saxon institutional legacy, which distinguished them from the Francophone majority of the country.⁴ This legacy was most visible in the structure, pedagogy, and governance of the education system, which emphasized participatory learning, local accountability, and the use of English as the principal medium of instruction. The establishment of the University of Buea in 1993 as the first Anglo-Saxon university in Cameroon further consolidated this educational identity, serving as a major hub for professional training and research and attracting students from across the country and the Central African sub-region.⁵ In the North-West, the creation of the University of Bamenda in 2010⁶ further reflected progress in access to English-language higher education and teacher training.

However, beneath these achievements lay deficiencies that constrained the quality and inclusiveness of education. Although school enrolment had expanded, the education system continued to suffer from overcrowding, insufficient infrastructure, shortages of teaching materials, and uneven deployment of qualified staff. At the national level, the World Bank observed that the student-teacher ratio in primary education by 2016 was 46: 1, which was higher than the averages for Sub-Saharan Africa and lower-middle-income countries.⁷

More importantly, the education sector became an important site of political contestation and grievance prior to the crisis. Anglophone teachers, lawyers, and civil society actors increasingly voiced concerns over what they perceived as the gradual erosion of the Anglo-Saxon educational subsystem.⁸ A key issue was the deployment of Francophone teachers to Anglophone schools, many of whom lacked sufficient proficiency in English and familiarity with Anglo-Saxon pedagogical methods. This was widely interpreted not only as an administrative inefficiency but also as a form of cultural and institutional marginalization.⁹ The situation was further exacerbated by concerns over curriculum harmonization, the dominance of Francophone educational norms in national examinations, and the perceived neglect of technical and professional education tailored to local needs. These concerns culminated in teachers' strikes in 2016, which served as a catalyst for the broader socio-political

¹ MF, *Cameroon: 2015 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report* (2015). Available at <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15331.pdf> (visited on the 10/03/2026)

² *Ibid.*

³ Buea Council, *Buea Communal Development Plan* (2012) 1–2, listing the municipality's social sectors and development vision, Available at https://www.pndp.org/documents/04_CDP_Buea.pdf (visited on the 21/03/2026)

⁴ Patrick Mbicho Monju. *The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Exploring Development gaps During the Crisis*. Available at <https://wacsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Anglophone-Crisis-In-Cameroon-Exploring-Development-Gaps-During-The-Crisis-Ne.pdf> (visited on the 21/03/2026).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The University of Bamenda was created by Presidential Decree No 2010/371 of 14 December 2010.

⁷ World Bank, *Republic of Cameroon: Priorities for Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity: Systematic Country Diagnostic* (2016). Available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/527781467208782508/pdf/103098-SCD-P151164-SecM2016-0193-IDA-SecM2016-0126-IFC-SecM2016-0072-MIGA-SecM2016-0072-Box396255B-OUO-9.pdf> (visited on the 21/03/2026)

⁸ Daniel OJONG. *Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis and its Impact on Education*. Available at <https://politeknik-international.org/pi8220/> (visited on the 12/03/2026)

⁹ Konings, P. and Nyamnjoh, F.B. (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35, 207-229.

crisis.¹

In the domain of health, the Anglophone regions similarly exhibited a pattern of modest progress. Cameroon as a whole had recorded gradual improvements in key health indicators in the years preceding the crisis, including reductions in under-five mortality and increased immunization coverage.² In the North West and South West regions, healthcare delivery was supported by a combination of public facilities and mission-run institutions, the latter often providing higher-quality services and better management. Notable examples include the Banzo Baptist Hospital, Mbingo Baptist Hospital, and St. Mary's Hospital in Mamfe, which served as important referral centers for large segments of the population.³ Despite these positive contributions, access to healthcare remained a challenge, particularly in rural and geographically isolated areas.⁴

2.3 Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resource Management

Before the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, the environmental sustainability situation in Cameroon's North-West and South-West Regions reflected a mixed picture. At the national level, Cameroon had already enacted a plethora of environmental legislations, notably the 1994 Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law, which expressly pursued the sustainable conservation and use of forest, wildlife and fisheries resources, and the 1996 Framework Law on Environmental Management, which recognized the environment as a national common heritage and made its protection a matter of public interest.⁵ From a legal standpoint, therefore, the pre-2016 period was not one of total regulatory absence; rather, it was one in which substantial legal commitments coexisted with implementation deficits.

In the South-West Region, around Mount Cameroon, forest loss and degradation had become serious enough to justify the creation of the national park in 2009 and the subsequent REDD+ initiative, which aimed to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation while preserving biodiversity and supporting local livelihoods.⁶ Likewise, in and around Korup and Takamanda, conservation policy had to contend with the dependence of local populations on forest resources for farming, fuelwood, bushmeat, and non-timber forest products.⁷ In the North-West Region, the environmental challenge manifested somewhat differently, particularly through land degradation, watershed deterioration, and unsustainable agricultural use of fragile highland ecosystems.

2.4 Infrastructure Development

Before the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, infrastructural development occupied a central place in Cameroon's development planning. At the policy level, the State had already linked national transformation to the expansion of transport, energy, communications and urban infrastructure. Cameroon's Vision 2035 expressly stated that infrastructure development was to be closely tied to economic objectives, with emphasis on the maintenance, rehabilitation and densification of communication, energy and telecommunications infrastructure in order to create an integrated national economic space and position Cameroon as a commercial hub in Central Africa.⁸ This policy orientation was operationalized through the *Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi* (DSCE) 2010–2020, which treated major infrastructure projects as the backbone of growth and anticipated increased investment in capital goods because of the realization of “grands projets

¹ *Ibid.*

² Ewang BF. *Vaccination Coverage Under the Expanded Program ... – PMC*. Available at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7359757/> (visited on the 21/03/2026)

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Republic of Cameroon, *Health Sector Strategy 2016–2027* (Ministry of Public Health, 2016). Available at https://www.minsante.cm/site/sites/default/files/HSS_english_0.pdf (visited on the 21/03/2026).

⁵ See Law No. 94/01 of 20 January 1994 to Lay Down Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Regulations, and the Law No. 96/12 of 5 August 1996 Relating to Environmental Management.

⁶ Anne M Larson and others, ‘REDD+ around Mount Cameroon, southwest region of Cameroon’ in *REDD+ on the Ground* (CIFOR, 2014). Available at https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/5270/?utm_source (visited on the 21/03/2026).

⁷ INFOE. (2014). *Deforestation, REDD and Takamanda National Park in Cameroon*. Available at https://www.infoe.de/wp-content/uploads/Case-Study-Cameroon_2014.pdf?utm_source (Available on the 21/03/2026).

⁸ *Republic of Cameroon, Cameroon Vision 2035*. Available at https://www.cameroon-embassy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Cameroon_VISION_2035_English_Version.pdf (visited on the 20/03/2026)

d'infrastructures.”¹ This policy framework was significant because it showed that, prior to the conflict, the Cameroonian State had formally accepted that the realization of development depended in substantial part on public infrastructure and territorial connectivity.²

In the energy sector, the pre-2016 period witnessed some of the most visible infrastructural achievements in the country. The Government's program for the 2016 fiscal year reported the commissioning of the Kribi gas power plant with a capacity of 216 megawatts, the partial priming of the Lom Pangar dam, and the near-finalization of the Mekin and Memve'ele hydropower dams, each said to have reached implementation rates averaging 70 percent by that time.³ These projects mattered greatly for national development because electricity shortages had long constituted a structural bottleneck to industrial activity, household welfare and service delivery. Yet several researchers have mentioned that, notwithstanding such flagship investments, electricity before 2016 remained expensive and unreliable, and Cameroon still underutilized its substantial hydroelectric potential.⁴ Thus, even before the outbreak of conflict, the country exhibited the classic contradiction of many developing states: high-profile energy projects advanced, but universal and reliable access remained far from achieved.⁵

In the transport sector, the pre-crisis period was similarly characterized by uneven progress. The Government reported completion of Phase I of the Kribi Industrial-Port Complex, which was intended to relieve pressure on Douala and improve Cameroon's role in regional and international trade.⁶ It also reported the completion of the 21 km feeder road to the Kribi deep-sea port, the construction of logistics infrastructure in Douala, and the completion of works on the Limbe Shipyard together with the procurement of a 5,000-ton dock. These were not symbolic works. They represented a strategic reconfiguration of the country's maritime and industrial infrastructure: Kribi was conceived as a deep-water alternative to the more congested Douala port, while Limbe's shipyard infrastructure strengthened the industrial and maritime profile of the South-West Region.⁷ In the context of sustainable development, such projects augmented international trade, create industrial employment, reduce transport costs and broaden the productive base of the economy.

The water sector reveals this mixed developmental picture even more clearly. According to the Government's 2016 programme statement, potable water supply centres were being constructed in 52 localities, expressly including Bamenda, Buea and Limbe.⁸ This indicates that both English-speaking regions were within the formal geographical scope of state and donor-supported water investments before the crisis. However, the later World Bank reported that access to basic sanitation in the North-West and South-West stood at 14% and 16% respectively, compared with 15% nationally, while access to basic water was 42% in the North-West and 27 percent in the South-West, compared with 30% nationally.⁹ This demonstrates that even where water infrastructure expansion was underway, its reach and developmental impact remained partial.¹⁰

The road sector offers perhaps the clearest illustration of both real progress and unresolved grievance. Government records for the 2013–2015 period stated that several road projects had been completed, including

¹ Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi (DSCE) 2010–2020. Available at https://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Cameroon_DSCE2010-20.pdf (visited on the 20/03/2026)

² *Ibid.*

³ See the 2015 *Government's Economic, Financial, Social and Cultural Programme for the 2016 Fiscal Year*, Presented by H.E Philimon Yang. Available at <https://www.spm.gov.cm/site/sites/default/files/DISOURS%20PM%20AN%20Novembre%202015%20%20ENGLISH%20B.pdf> (visited on the 20/03/2026)

⁴ Carolina Dominguez & Vivien Foster. (September 2011). *Cameroon's Infrastructure: A Continental Perspective* (Policy Research Working Paper 5822 by The World Bank Africa Region Sustainable Development Unit) WPS5822.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Republic of Cameroon, Government's Economic, Financial, Social and Cultural Programme for the 2016 Fiscal Year. Available at www.spm.gov.cm/site/sites/default/files/DISOURS%20PM%20AN%20Novembre%202015%20%20ENGLISH%20B.pdf (visited on the 20/03/2026)

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Republic of Cameroon, Government's Economic, Financial, Social and Cultural Programme for the 2016 Fiscal Year, *Op.cit.*

⁹ World Bank Group. (2021). *The Socio-Political Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon: Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts*. Available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/795921624338364910/pdf/The-Socio-Political-Crisis-in-the-Northwest-and-Southwest-Regions-of-Cameroon-Assessing-the-Economic-and-Social-Impacts.pdf> (visited on the 24/03/2026)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the Numba–Bachuo Akagbe section of 52 km in the South-West Region and the 50 km Ndop–Kumbo section of the Ring Road in the North-West Region.¹ These were important achievements. The Ring Road has long been regarded as one of the most strategic transport corridors in the North-West because it links numerous divisional headquarters and facilitates the movement of goods and people across the region.² At the same time, the same official statement acknowledged that other projects remained ongoing, including the Bamenda–Batibo–Numba road and the Bachuo Akagbe–Mamfe section.³ This means that, on the eve of the crisis, several major transport links in Anglophone Cameroon were still incomplete and remained part of an unfinished development agenda.

Yet it is precisely in this road sector that the pre-crisis limits of infrastructural development in Anglophone Cameroon became most politically visible. The World Bank's 2021 study on the crisis records that many Anglophone grievances were tied to perceptions of deliberate underinvestment in key transport corridors. It reproduces the Buea Declaration's complaint that the all-season trunk road running from Victoria through Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda to Wum and Nkambe had been abandoned, while the Douala–Bafoussam route had been developed, thereby forcing Anglophones to depend on Francophone territory for movement between major Anglophone towns.⁴ The same report is careful to note, however, that prior to the crisis the North-West and South-West did not objectively lag behind the rest of the country in broad economic and social indicators and in fact had some of the country's strongest human capital outcomes.⁵ This implied that, the conflict's infrastructural dimension was not reducible to absolute absence of infrastructure, but rather to perceived inequity, historical memory, territorial symbolism and the belief that strategic integration of Anglophone space had been systematically under-prioritized.⁶

3. Effects of the Crisis on Sustainable Development

This ongoing conflict has undermined sustainable development; it has increased the rate of poverty, displaced the population, and caused massive destruction and violated human rights as well as loss of thousands of lives which per the Brundtland Report are consequences that undermine the achievement of Sustainable development. Hospitals, schools, churches, houses and villages have been burnt down. For example, in the South West region of Cameroon precisely in Kumba on the 11th February, 2019, the Kumba District hospital was burnt down by armed fighters. The government of Cameroon said at least 20 armed separatists attacked and set fire to the hospital in the early hours of Monday. It says four people, including two patients, were killed.⁷ In 2022 the Mamfe District Hospital was equally burnt down on the 8th June 2022. The attack, destruction and burning down of the hospital effectively left over 85,000 people, who depended on it, stranded without a better alternative.⁸

In addition, in 2017, separatist activists began to burn school buildings, threatening education officials with violence if they did not enforce a boycott of schools in the Anglophone regions. As of June 2018, UNICEF indicated that 58 schools had been damaged in the two regions.⁹ Human rights groups and international organizations have reported deteriorating political, humanitarian, and security conditions as a result of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, severe deprivations of liberty, and mass displacements of civilian populations. International, regional, and domestic actors, such as the United Nations, the International Crisis Group (ICG), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, among others, as well as the media and Cameroonian human rights organizations, including the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA), have been reporting on the crisis and expressing grave

¹ Republic of Cameroon, Government's Economic, Financial, Social and Cultural Programme for the 2016 Fiscal Year (*Op.cit.*).

² The Kumbo Council Development Plan had long described the Ring Road as the main road in the North-West Region linking virtually all divisional headquarters. See the Plan at https://www.pndp.org/documents/20_CDP_Kumbo.pdf?utm_source (visited on the 24/03/2026)

³ Republic of Cameroon, Government's Economic, Financial, Social and Cultural Programme for the 2016 Fiscal Year (*Op.cit.*).

⁴ World Bank. (2021). The Socio-Political Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon: Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts. *Op.cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Moki Edwin. (13th February, 2019). Cameroon Hospitals Attacked; Medical Staff; Patients Flee. *ReliefWeb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-hospital-attacked-medical-staff-patients-flee> (4th July, 2025).

⁸ Burning of Mamfe District Hospital: CHRDA, Cameroon Anglophone Crisis Database of Atrocities Report Indict Separatist. *Journalistes en Afrique pour le Développement (JADE) Cameroun*, 19th December, 2022. <https://jadecameroun.com/2022/12/19/burning-of-mamfe-district-hospital-chrda-cameroon-anglophone-crisis-database-of-atrocities-report-indict-separatists/> (Accessed 4th August 2025).

⁹ Human Rights Watch. These Killings Can Be Stopped: Abuses Against Civilians in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions (New York: Human Rights Watch, July 2018) p. 10.

concern. More than 200 villages have been partly or completely destroyed, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee. The rate of attacks on villages has increased steadily, usually causing significant damage. Between 450,000 and 550,000 people have been displaced as a result of the crisis, representing about 10 percent of the regions' population. An additional 30,000 to 35,000 people have sought asylum in neighbouring countries.¹ All of this chaos and instability hinders the attainment of sustainable development in Cameroon.

In the agricultural sector, one of the most enduring challenges is the continuing inability of farmers to access land, inputs, markets, and safe transport corridors on a reliable basis. Agriculture remains central to livelihoods in the conflict-affected regions, yet the conflict has repeatedly interrupted the production and commercialization of key crops. The World Bank's assessment of the crisis notes that the North-West and South-West conflict prevented Cameroon from benefiting fully from favorable prices and rebounds in important agricultural exports such as cocoa, coffee, and bananas, while displacement, lost working days, underused capital, and supply disruption all contributed to declining productivity and welfare.

The socio-political crisis has greatly affected the CDC plantations (Rubber, Banana and Palm) in Tiko as the corporation has witnessed severe damages and destruction of the plantation properties with direct consequences on the livelihood situation of the plantation workers. In 2019, only 7 out of 29 CDC production sites were fully operational in Tiko. Twelve had been shut down while 10 were partially functioning. This had an adverse impact on the production capacity and the workers in the plantations.² For rubber, annual production dropped from about 16,894 tons in 2017 to 2,884 tons in 2019, palm oil production dropped from 125,370 tons in 2017 to 72,435 tons in 2020 while banana production dropped from 113,858 to 6,178 tons over the same period with a variation in the % of crops achieved at the end of the year.³ The drop in productivity was because workers were forced to stop work as a result of the Anglophone crisis.

Moreso, the CDC processing plants in Tiko and its workers suffered from the negative effect of the crisis as some separatists fighters established their operation camps at the CDC plantations, forcing workers to abandon the farms and flee for safety. The disruption in activities saw CDC's revenue plummet, and the company has since continued to default in the payment of workers' wages especially the rubber and palm workers in Tiko thus, the socio-political crisis has negatively affected the CDC plantations and the livelihood of the workers most especially in Tiko.⁴ The CDC, with an initial work-force of 20,000 workers, (...) almost 12,500 workers were jobless. Only 7,500 workers were effectively working and this number included clerical worker.⁵ Thousands of workers have left the agro-industrial company either forcefully or unexpectedly as a result of the Anglophone crisis.⁶ The aim of the separatist fighters was to prevent other CDC workers going to work, an attempt to harm the government, creating chaos and gain more power and support from the society and thus, led to the reduction of government revenue.⁷

The environmental of the crisis in Anglophone Cameroon remain serious even though they are less frequently foregrounded than humanitarian and political issues. One central difficulty is that conflict has increased pressure on land, forests, and other natural resources by displacing populations, concentrating them in safer areas, and weakening ordinary systems of land management and environmental regulation. During armed conflicts, natural habitats and ecosystems can be severely damaged or destroyed. This may be due to direct belligerent/military activities, such as deforestation, land degradation, and the disruption of wildlife habitats.⁸ The destruction of forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitats directly impacts ecosystems and biodiversity. According to some key reports of some reputable international institutions in charge of environmental protection, the weaponry used in

¹ Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, "Cameroon's Unfolding Catastrophe: Evidence of Human Rights Violations and Crimes against Humanity in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon" (June 3, 2019) Online www.chrda.org. and www.rwhrc.org. (Accessed 8th May, 2024).

² *Ibid.*

³ International Crisis Group. (2023). Crisis in the plantation sector: Impacts on workers and strategies for resilience. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/crisis-plantation-sector-impacts-workers-and-strategies-resilience> (visited on the 23/03/2026)

⁴ Damian, R. (2021). Resilience and adaptation strategies of plantation workers in times of crisis: A case study in the rubber industry. *Journal of Development Studies*, 41(5), 789-805.

⁵ Ngoh VJ. (2018). *Cameroon 1884–Present The History of a People*. (Limbe: Design House).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See amnesty international 2023 human rights report on Cameroon, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street London WC1X 0DW, UK, 2023.

armed conflicts most often have direct consequences on the environment in armed conflict.¹ For instance, the remnants of explosive in the armed conflict in Anglophone Cameroon has severely affected the environment especially through the contamination of the soil and water sources, and harming wildlife within the conflict hit region. According to some community members in Bamenda, water sources, including rivers, lakes, and wells, have been contaminated by various factors, such as: discarded Munitions from explosives and ammunition remnants which contaminate water bodies.² The management of the dump sites during the armed conflict like the one in Masake in Buea and Mbellewa in Bamenda have been made impossible by the armed conflict.³

Evidence from research shows that the conflict has displaced over 712,000 people⁴, many of whom are farmers and herders. According to other sources, more than 200 villages have been partly or completely destroyed, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee. The rate of attacks on villages has increased steadily, usually causing significant damage. Between 450,000 and 550,000 people have been displaced as a result of the crisis, representing about 10% of the regions' population. An additional 30,000 to 35,000 people have sought asylum in neighbouring countries. Displacement disrupts agricultural activities and access to land, making it difficult for people to produce or obtain food and results in large-scale displacement of populations, leading to increased pressure on natural resources in host communities, such as water, arable land, and forests. This, in turn leads to overexploitation of resources, deforestation, and habitat degradation as communities struggle to meet their basic needs.⁵

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The foregoing analysis irresistibly demonstrates that the armed conflict in Cameroon's English-speaking regions has greatly affected the attainment of sustainable development by rendering the State's otherwise appreciable legal, institutional and policy framework largely ineffective in practice, as protracted insecurity and the breakdown of public order have displaced constitutional and statutory guarantees with conditions of destruction, displacement, poverty, educational collapse, environmental harm, human rights abuse and public distrust; accordingly, the study maintains that the principal difficulty lies not in the absence of legal instruments, but in their limited legal efficacy under conditions of armed conflict, since the State's responsive measures, though indicative of institutional recognition of the crisis, have thus far fallen short of establishing a coherent, enforceable and rights-based framework capable of confronting both the structural causes of the conflict and its far-reaching developmental consequences.

From the standpoint of this research, the central problem is not the total absence of law, but the insufficiency of legal effectiveness in times of armed conflict. The measures adopted by the State, including the Grand National Dialogue, special status arrangements, DDR initiatives and reconstruction efforts, demonstrate an acknowledgment of the crisis, but they have not yet yielded a sufficiently coherent, enforceable and rights-based framework capable of addressing the structural roots of the conflict and its devastating consequences for development.

In essence, this research recommends a rights-based and conflict-sensitive reconstruction framework in which sustainable development in the North-West and South-West Regions is pursued through genuine constitutional dialogue, accountability, and the rule of law, while simultaneously strengthening the legal enforceability of development obligations in key sectors such as education, health, environmental governance, and local administration; it further urges the urgent restoration and protection of essential public infrastructure and livelihoods, the reactivation and adequate resourcing of public institutions, the creation of a dedicated mechanism for monitoring the conflict's impact on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the legal mainstreaming of community participation so that post-conflict recovery is not only institutionally effective but also locally legitimate, socially responsive, and enduring.

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 - ² In an interview with some community members around the wetland in Ntanhah community in Bamenda, north west region, Cameroon on the 16 of December 10/2026.
 - ³ Shing Praise Wandia. (November 2024). Challenges and Prospects of Environmental Protection in the Anglophone Armed Conflict in Cameroon. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, VIII(XI), 2728-2949: 2734.
 - ⁴ *Human Rights Watch 2022 Report on Cameroon*. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/worldreport/2022/country-chapters/cameroon> (Visited on the 23/03/2026)
 - ⁵ Shing Praise Wandia (2024). *Op.cit.*

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