

# LOCAL YOUTH CORNER CAMEROON



## ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

# 2019

## **Introduction**

Local Youth Corner Cameroon over the past 5 years has been working relentlessly to ensure that young Cameroonians are key actors in peacebuilding, and their initiatives are valorized by development stakeholders involved in resolving conflicts. Last year, our initiatives centered on countering hate speech, and promoting rehabilitation and reintegration of former violent offenders. Although the intensity of the crisis in the Far North Region has reduced, the armed conflict between separatist fighters and government forces in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest Regions is still ongoing. Throughout the year 2019, we have been boosting our efforts at countering/preventing violent extremism, and setting the stage for young Cameroonians to actively participate in the peace process in Cameroon.

The year 2019 witnessed the convening of the Major National Dialogue by the President of the Republic of Cameroon to find lasting solutions to the armed conflict in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, and discuss other security and development challenges Cameroon faces. This was yet another opportunity to influence government policy by ensuring that young Cameroonians submit realistic and achievable proposals towards ending violence and resolving the conflicts in Cameroon. It was our collective responsibility to ensure that the Major National Dialogue does not turn out to be a “missed opportunity” for the Cameroonian youth. This report presents an overview of some of LOYOC’s major activities for 2019.

## **1. MAJOR PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED**

In 2019, Local Youth Corner was active in drafting and implementing various projects in different formats such as conferences, thematic workshops, residential trainings, community restitutions and symposiums. These activities are explained in detail below.

### **a. Workshop on the role of youth and women in countering and preventing violent extremism in Cameroon**

Location: Yaoundé

Timeline: February to March 2019

Objective: To optimise and raise awareness about Cameroon-Commonwealth Cooperation in the domain of P/CVE, strengthen the voices of youth and women and

prioritises their leadership and participation to reverse the growing threat of violent extremism.

Major activities:

- One-day workshop on the role of youth and women in countering and preventing violent extremism in Cameroon
- Community outreach activities by workshop participants to raise awareness on the need for youth and women participation in preventing and countering violent extremism
- Sensitisation campaigns on media (radio and TV) and schools (secondary schools and universities) to highlight the role of youth and women in peacebuilding

Major outcomes:

- Over 100 acquired knowledge on strategies to counter and prevent violent extremism, and the role of various public and non-state institutions
- Participants outlined their aspirations in the Yaoundé Declaration on the Role of Youth and Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Cameroon

Partners: British High Commission, Commonwealth Department – Ministry of External Relations and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education



*Picture view of workshop on the Role of Youths in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism- source, LOYOC*

## **b. Empowering Youths as Peace Actors in a Connected Commonwealth**

**Location: Yaoundé**

## Timeline: March 2019

Objective: To train youths on strategies for promoting peace in various local communities, raise awareness on Commonwealth values and advocate for improved youth participation in Commonwealth activities

Major activities:

- One-day training workshop to empower youth leaders on mechanisms for sustainable peace in local communities
- Media sensitisation campaigns on Cameroonian - Commonwealth cooperation for youth empowerment

Major outcomes:

- Over 70 youth leaders acquired skills on enhancing community-driven peace efforts
- Participants acquired knowledge on existing Youth Networks within the Commonwealth. They pledged to join existing Commonwealth Youth Networks and establish those which are not existing
- A call for government to support youth peace initiatives and the activities of Commonwealth Youth Networks in Cameroon which were outlined in a Youth Statement drafted by the participants

Partners: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education and Commonwealth Department – Ministry of External Relations



Picture view: Empowering Youths as Peace Actors in a Connected Commonwealth; source: LOYOC

### **c. Human Rights training for police officers in the East Region**

Location: Bertoua

Timeline: March to April 2019

Objective: To train police officers from different branches of the Cameroon police force in the East Region on respecting the rights of women and girls in the exercise of their duties

Major activities:

- 2 – day workshop to examine and validate human rights training modules for the police officers
- 4 – day human rights training workshop for the Cameroon police force in the East Region

Major outcomes:

- 23 police officers from different branches of the police force in the East Region acquired new knowledge and skills on protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls
- Participants resolved to pass on the knowledge to their peers in their respective workplaces, and they called on the government and its partners to extend these training opportunities to police officers in other regions of Cameroon
- The Department of Training at the General Delegation for National Security intends developing a training manual on human rights training for police officers which will be used for training in different National Police Training Institutions

Partners: British High Commission Yaoundé

### **d. Building Peace: Youth facilitating the peace process in Cameroon**

Location: East Region, Far North Region, Northwest Region and Southwest Region

Timeline: 6 months (July to December 2019)

Objective: To empower and sensitize 600 young people from 4 regions of Cameroon on participating in peace processes, and create a safe space for collaboration and exchange of expertise between youth leaders, government, and other development stakeholders in developing strategies toward ending violence in Cameroon

### Major activities:

- 4 – day residential training of trainers’ workshop to train 30 youth leaders on peacebuilding processes, conflict transformation and conflict resolution
- Pass-it-on activities by the 30 trained youth leaders in various local communities in the 4 conflict – hit regions of Cameroon
- Conduct an evidenced-based research on the role of young Cameroonians in peacebuilding processes

### Major outcomes:

- 30 youth leaders acquired knowledge and skills on designing, implementing and evaluating peace processes
- Over 600 youths trained by the Peer educators in local communities in the conflict-affected regions of Cameroon
- Improved knowledge of the role of youths in peace processes in Cameroon through the evidence-based research

Partners: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education, Search for Common Ground, Office of the UN Youth Envoy, Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security



*Figure: Official opening of the Building Peace training*



*Panel discussion with Youth peacebuilders from across Africa*

### **e. Displaced but Not Challenged: Providing Economic and Psycho-Social Support for Displaced Women**

Location: Yaoundé

Timeline: 8 months (July 2019 to February 2020)

Objective: To enhance the economic self-reliance of women IDPs in Yaoundé through small business development training and psycho-social support activities

Major activities:

- 3 – day training for 30 IDP women on small business development, financial literacy, health and legal assistance
- Counseling sessions in the form of clinics for IDP women (Small business development Clinic, Psycho-Social Counselling Clinic, Health Clinic and Legal Clinic)
- Provision of start-up grants to commence or scale up 10 selected small business ideas, and follow-up of the performance of the businesses

Major outcomes:

- Created a safe space for IDP women to express the challenges they face in their respective communities
- 30 IDP women acquired knowledge on how to start-up or scale up small businesses towards the direction of profitability, and were transformed into Internally Displaced Entrepreneurs (IDEs)
- IDP women were inspired by positive stories of other IDPs who have been successful in their business ventures
- 10 IDP women who were supported with start-up grants have either scaled up their businesses or started businesses which has improved on their household incomes

Partners: Davis Foundation (Projects for Peace)



*Psychosocial and business workshop for IDP women IDP women received business startup grants*

## **f. National Symposium on Youth participation in the peace process in Cameroon**

Location: Yaoundé

Timeline: October 2019

Objective: To create a safe space for youth leaders, policy makers, government and development stakeholders working on facilitating the peace process in Cameroon to share their experiences of facilitating the peace process in respective communities

Major activities:

- Discussions in plenary sessions on the following themes: Post National Dialogue: The role of youths; Opportunities and Challenges of the peace process in Cameroon; Promoting Youth Networking and Collaboration in Peacebuilding; and The Role of the Media in Promoting Young Peacebuilders and Change makers
- Presentation and validation of the research findings on the role of youths in the peace process in Cameroon
- Launching of a Young Mediators' Network

Major outcomes:

- The Cameroon Young Mediator's Network was officially launched and its members pledged to foster the spirit of dialogue in their respective communities



- 30 youth leaders from the 10 regions of Cameroon formulated proposals for the implementation of the resolutions of the Grand National Dialogue
- Improved understanding of UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 and 2419 among young Cameroonians
- The Government of Cameroon and development stakeholders pledged to train and support the activities of the Cameroon Youth Mediators' Network
- The findings of the research is being used as an advocacy instrument to influence government policy on involving youths in the peace process at all levels

Partners: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education, Cameroon National Youth Council, Commonwealth Department – Ministry of External Relations, Search for Common Ground, British High Commission in Yaoundé, Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network, and United Network of Youth Peacebuilders.



1) Panel discussion with youth peacebuilder at the Symposium 2) Group photo with participants and international peace expert (Mr. Sarji Prelis)

## 2. RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

In a bid to inform the actions and policies of various development stakeholders, LOYOC Cameroon commissioned and published research documents on targeting major development themes related to Cameroon. These publications include:

### a. Hate Speech and violent conflict in Cameroon

<https://www.loyocameroon.org/hate-speech-and-violent-conflict-in-cameroon/>

This work argues that hate speech, which appears in the forms of propaganda, fake news, and disinformation is destroying social cohesion in Cameroon and it is

becoming very prevalent among politicians during elections as well as civilians against government or citizens which is fanning violent conflict in Cameroon. It highlights eight positive practices undertaken by young people in Cameroon towards countering/preventing hate speech, and suggests among many recommended solutions that public condemnation of hate speech by government and citizens are not enough. It strongly calls for legislation to penalise users of hate speech.

The outcome of this research was the promulgation of a law to punish hate speech and tribalism (Law No 2019/020 of 24<sup>th</sup> December 2019 to amend and supplement some provisions of Law No 2016/7 of 12 July 2016 relating to the penal code).

**b. Youths and peace processes in Cameroon: Opportunities and Challenges**

<https://www.loyocameroon.org/youths-and-peace-processes-in-cameroon-opportunities-and-challenges/>

This research highlights the opportunities and challenges of youth participation in the peace process in Cameroon. It adopts the 3 layers of peace processes (in the room, around the room and outside the room) to provide evidence of how young Cameroonians are already involved in the peace process. It proposes key recommendations for different stakeholders toward supporting youth participation in the peace process to end violence in Cameroon.