HATE SPEECH AND VIOLENT CONFLICT IN CAMEROON

CO-AUTHORS
Kweitsu Richard
Besong Bawack Mallet

EDITOR(S)
Achaleke Christian leke

September, 2019
Citation: Local Youth Corner Cameroon (2019). “Hate Speech and Violent Conflict in Cameroon.” Yaoundé.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT iv
ACRONYMS v
ABSTRACT vi

## INTRODUCTION

1. MEANING AND DIMENSIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS
   1.1. Hate Speech 4
   1.2. Propaganda 6
   1.3. Violent Conflict 6
   1.4. Hate Speech and Freedom of Speech 7

## PART TWO

11. MANIFESTATION OF HATE SPEECH IN CAMEROON
   2.1. Key Hate Speech Terms and phrases in Cameroon 12
      2.1.1. Anglofools 13
      2.1.2. Franco-frog 13
      2.1.3. Cam no go/ Graffiti 14
      2.1.4. Les Bamenda 16
      2.1.5. Boko Haram 16

## PART THREE

26. BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN PREVENTING/COUNTERING HATE SPEECH IN CAMEROON
   3.1. Youths Countering Hate Speech In Cameroon 27
      3.1.1. Eight Youth-led Positive Practices in to Preventing Hate Speech 28
   3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS 34
      3.2.1. Role of the Government 34
      3.2.2. The role of the Civil Society, Non-governmental Organisations and International Non-governmental Organisations 35
      3.2.3. The Role of Traditional and religious Leaders 36
      3.2.4. The role of the forces of Law and Order 37
      3.2.5. The Role of the Media and Journalists 37
   3.3. SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION 38

SELECTED REFERENCES 41
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy document on Hate Speech and Violent Conflict in Cameroon has gone through a lengthy course and Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC) is indebted to many people for their contribution, patience and dedication to the realisation of this masterpiece. LOYOC appreciates all who have provided invaluable input and expertise to reviewing and testing this work.

Our first appreciation goes to the two authors: Kweitsu Richard (Mo Ibrahim Scholar-Ghana) and Besong Bawack Mallet (LOYOC), and the editor: Achaleke Christian Leke (LOYOC) for braving the challenges encountered along the way, working as a team to create this publication. We would also like to recognise and extend special thanks to colleagues for their insights and constructive inputs that helped shape this work, as well as contributions in conducting interviews, focus group discussions and data analysis, including Nina Forwge, Dione Sharon Epie, Melissa Juisi Simo, Ashu Enow Nadia, Tangang Andrew, Laura Ijang, Ngue Naah Vanessa, Agbortoko Dwight Oben, Indira Banga, Ndengwe Gladys Ntube, Yukieseh Larissa Nibameh, Djouwairatou, Suh Emmanuel Pivagah, Yulah Mirabel, Nneh Adele Ngole, Ameneh Joyly Ngum and Mbah Drusilla.

We heartily thank all external reviewers; Saji Prelis (SFCG Washington DC), Mesumbe Ndialle (MINREX), and Lyndsey Platt (Nexus Fund) who made priceless suggestions and remarks which helped us in properly framing this work.

We also express our gratitude to our respondents who provided information and all the youth influencers who participated in the workshop and effectively carried out their spread love campaigns in their respective communities and even helped us administer questionnaires in their communities.

Very special thanks to Nexus Fund and the Commonwealth CVE Unit for providing the fund for the Hate Speech project and the research, and to our implementing partners; UNESCO Regional Office for Central Africa, Ministries of Youth Affairs and Civic Education and of External Relations (MINJEC/MINREX), the Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN).

Finally, we thank the almighty God for providing inspiration and support to the youth-led team that developed this work.
# ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWI</td>
<td>World War ONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTLM</td>
<td>Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVE</td>
<td>Countering Violent Extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGOs</td>
<td>International Non-governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMTEL</td>
<td>Cameroon Telecommunication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTN</td>
<td>Mobile Telephone Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>Frequency Modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The increase in violent conflict in Cameroon has been captured by available literature as an outcome of poor governance, poverty, discrimination, marginalisation and the list continues. Nevertheless, the role of hate speech, which seemingly has become a community to national problems, has not been satisfactorily examined as a major driver of violent conflict in Cameroon. This phenomenon grew from the days of colonialism, to independence and to the birth of democracy and now today. This paper (research work) examines the nexus between hate speech and violent conflict in Cameroon. The secondary data used for this publication was supplemented with offline and online interviews and survey, as well as focused group discussions with young people, traditional and religious authorities, social media influencers, civil society actors and government officials identified from five regions in the four geo-political regions of Cameroon; South West, Far North, Littoral, Centre and North West regions; and diaspora communities. 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 that is fanning violent conflict in Cameroon. This publication presents the contradiction between hate speech and freedom of speech. It further demonstrates the process involved in hate speech leading to violence as well as presents examples of commonly used hate terms and the main authors of hate speech in the country. This work also emphasizes on the prevailing influence of hate speech in fuelling the current crisis in the Far North, Northwest and the Southwest Regions of Cameroon. The work highlights eight positive practices undertaken by young people in Cameroon toward solving hate speech. This work suggests among many recommended solutions that public condemnations of hate speech by government and citizens are not enough. It strongly calls for a legislation to curtail and penalise users of hate speech.

Keywords: Hate Speech; Violent Conflict; Propaganda
INTRODUCTION

As we strive to entrench democratic values, freedoms and rights have emerged as the positive practices for an ideal form of governance, many countries are enjoying the beauty of these but are grappling on curtailing some of the negative outcomes of the misuse of these democratic practices. Violent conflict ranging political violence to civil wars and arm conflicts has characterised many countries across the world which lack the structures and capacity to effectively manage the implementation of their democracy. These democratic values allow for citizens to question governments on respect of social contract, speak and protest as well as participate fully in the electoral process. For example, the birth of multi-party politics in Cameroon affected the country’s socio-political life with tendency of “tensions, conflicts, blockages and sometimes violence on the part of some actors and political parties” (Ngole. 1996: 6).

Cameroons’ socio-political and geographical structure dates back to 1884, when it became a German colony known as German Kamerun. In 1916, after the WWI Cameroon was seized from the Germans and handed to Britain and France as a mandated territory which they later partitioned it into two uneven parts with France taking the greater share (4/5 of the territory) and called it Cameroun while Britain took a smaller share (1/5 of the territory) and named it British Southern Cameroons. France administered her own share from Yaoundé as part of her French overseas territories under the Direct Rule while Britain administered her own part of the territory as an integral part of Nigeria using the British Indirect Rule. By 1946, with the establishment of the United Nations Trusteeships, the question of independence became a persistent subject in French Cameroun. British Cameroons was more peaceful and the main question was whether to join Nigeria or reunite with French Cameroun (Ngole. 1996).

In 1960, The Republic Cameroun gained independence and experienced the first wave of democratic practices characterised by multipartism. On the other hand, the British Southern Cameroon experienced her first wave of democracy after the United Nations held a referendum on February 11, 1961, to determine if British Southern Cameroons should join French Cameroun or Nigeria to achieve independence. The two Cameroons reunified on October 1, 1961 forming a democratic Federal Republic of Cameroon with English and French being the two official Languages. In 1972, then President Ahmadou Ahidjo dissolved the federation and established the United Republic of Cameroon. Twelve years later in 1984, President Paul Biya changed the name to the present Republic of Cameroon (La République du Cameroun); the same name French Cameroun had acquired during its independence from France in 1960 before the reunification and federation talks that merged both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon. Anglophone Cameroonians have decried political, economic and socio-cultural domination and marginalization since they joined French Cameroon.
Since the independence of Cameroon the socio-cultural diversity ranging from over 200 ethnic groups, several religions and two international languages presented a great opportunity for strength. Unfortunately, over time this dividend has not been properly exploited (Nyamnjoh & Rowlands; 1998). Culturally, Cameroon is divided into four main parts (Sudano-sahel, Grassfield, Sawa and Fang Beti) and linguistically, between the Anglophone (English) and Francophone (French). The population predominantly described as Francophone constitute approximately 80% of the total population with the Anglophone minority constituting the remaining 20%. In all, Cameroon has ten geographical regions (Far North, North, Adamawa, Center, South, East, South, Littoral, Southwest and Northwest) with eight (8) located in the Francophone region and the remaining two (2) in the Anglophone region.

To understand the concept of hate speech in greater depth, this research sampled responses from five (5) regions in Cameroon; comprising the Centre, Littoral, Northwest, Southwest and Far North. This diversity has rather exposed the country to challenges that has grown from public questioning into protest and most recently violent conflict. Violent conflict that can significantly be seen as a major negative outcome of Cameroon’s diversity and missuses of democratic values has affected the country’s unity. According to Human Rights Watch, violent conflicts in Cameroon has recently displaced over 714,100 people, properties destroyed with over 1000 lives lost in the Far North, North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

One of the devastating offshoot in Cameroons’ diversity, which is fuelling this violent conflict, is the rise of hate speech (Eyango, 2018:63). The use of hate speech in the forms of propaganda, fake news, insults by politicians, government officials and civilians is not a new phenomenon in Cameroon. From the Far North of Cameroon, the terrorist group uses hate speech including; “western education if forbidden” to foment violence on Christians and circular lifestyle. Similarly, some of the respondents share that the use of hate language on Anglophones by French speaking Cameroonians contributed to gradual radicalisation them and subsequently contributed to the current violence in North West and South West. PeaceTech Lab in her Hate Speech Lexicon of Hate Speech in Cameroon describes the effect of hate speech to dehumanize opponents, exacerbate feelings of frustration and hate, and calling for violent action.

The emergence of social media has increased the use and spread of hate speech across Cameroon. Activist of the Anglophone crises, security forces, government, armed groups and civilians use these platforms to spread hateful messages. An interviewee shared that; “The inability to curtail or check social media has made users of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter,
WhatsApp to disseminate hate languages, fake news and misinform with the defence of exercising their human right of freedom of expression”. ¹

Considering the current political instability in Cameroon, it is imperative to understand the concept of hate speech to develop a robust strategic framework to combat it. This research will seek to understand the concept of hate speech within the political, social and economic context of Cameroon from the perspective of young people, provide some commonly used hate terms and phrases. This publication is developed with the aim of providing the reader, academia, practitioners and policy makers with an insight on the relationship between hate speech and violent conflict as well as some efforts carried out by young people and recommendations on how to prevent and combat hate speech in Cameroon.

¹ Interview with John in Yaoundé 23-july 2019
This section highlights the meaning and dimensions of the key concepts of hate speech, propaganda and violence as related to the context of Cameroon. It will provide definitions and highlight how it occurs in the Cameroonian society.

1.1. Hate Speech

Although there is universal consensus that hate speech is injurious to state stability, and has the potential to incite political violence, there is no universal definition of hate speech. As such, what may be considered hate speech differs from one country to the other and from one individual to another.

Understanding the concept of hate speech deeply, ‘hate’ can be described as a strong and irrational emotion taking forms as insults, hostility and hatred towards a targeted individual or group due to their specific and/or unique attributes. In the same light, intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury could also be seen as hate. On the other hand, ‘speech’ is an expression to convey opinions or ideas through different mediums. A speech could also be referred to as an expression of or the ability to express thoughts and feelings by articulate sounds.

According to Cohen-Almagor, (2013: 43) Hate speech is defined as a bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics. It expresses discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic, and/or prejudicial attitudes toward those characteristics, which include gender, race, religion, ethnicity, colour, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. Hate speech is aimed to injure, dehumanize, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade, and victimize the targeted groups and victims.

Neisser (1994:337), considers hate speech to be “all communications (whether verbal, written, symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are inferior in some respect or by indicating that they are despised or not welcome for any other reasons”. Neisser argued that apart from causing danger of physical assault, hate speech risks violent reaction.

For this work, we conceptualise hate speech as an expression, gesture or acts which is capable of instilling or inciting hatred of, or prejudice towards a person or group of people on a specific ground including, ethno-religious identity, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation and disability.
It is instructive to note that inherent in all definitions of hate speech is the ability or desire to incite harm either violently or other ways that directly infringes the fundamental human rights of others. However, the dilemma which often exists relates to striking a balance between what might be considered freedom of speech and what can be considered as hate speech which incites violence or hatred against an individual or group of people.

Callamard, A. (2015) uses a triangle to clearly demonstrate the forms of hate speech and its dimensions; this he calls the Hate Speech Triangle (See Below)

**Figure 1: Hate Speech Triangle**

Based on the analysis above, a speech can be described as hate language based on the intent of the speaker to incite, the likelihood of violence to take place and the causal link between the speaker’s intention and violence. Considering this, there is clear need for distinction on what constitutes hate language and free speech. Under international law, the hate speech triangle offers insight into what speech can be classified as hate speech (Callamard, A. 2015). As highlighted in the triangle, any communication that inspires and incites people to engage in genocide, violence and propaganda, discrimination, glorify, promote, justify racial superiority, racism, terrorism; as well as other hate speech acts that disseminate, propagate or spread hostility and hatred, negative stereotypes among others directly fall under the purview of hate speech.
1.2. Propaganda

The term propaganda in times of conflict is mostly seen with a negative or dishonest connotation. It has widely been used synonymous to terms like; lies, manipulation, brain washing, mind control, deceit and most recently fake news. De Vito (1986:139) defines propaganda as “organised persuasion”. According to Sproule (1994:8) “propaganda is an organised mass persuasion with covert intent and poor or non-existent reasoning…” He states that “Propaganda represents the work of large organisations or groups to win over the public for special interest through a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions, packaged to conceal both their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supportive reason” (ibid). Propaganda has a significant role in transforming conflict either negatively or positively. Mainstream media and online media have proven to be a very influential medium of disseminating propaganda that has had great impact in conflict situations, like the case of the Rwandan Genocide. As Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2014) highlights, when the RTLM radio station called for the extermination of the Tutsi minority ethnic group and claimed that pre-emptive violence against the Tutsi population was a necessary response of self-defence; it radicalised and incited the Tutsi to attack the Hutus. In Cameroon, several cases of mass and online media propaganda have been witnessed with government, civilians and violent groups using it as a tool to protect their interest. For example, in 2018 in an attempt for supporters of separatist movements to brain wash its followers that the UN was supporting the government of Cameroon in the Anglophone crises, a headline news; “CONFIRMED: UN Soldiers involved in Burning of Ambazonia Villages as IDPs Cry for Relief Support” featured in blog post, and other social media platforms.²

1.3. Violent Conflict

The word violent conflict combines the term “Violence” and “conflict” to demonstrate a complex social situation where conflicts becomes physical or emotional and leads to material, human or emotional damage. Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social, or environmental damage, and prevent people from reaching their full potential (Arauo 2018). On the other hand, Conflict presents a situation where two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or take to pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties. Frère and Wilen (2015) see conflict as the motor of transformation, which can either present with a positive or negative outcome.

According to Szayna et al., (2017) violent conflict refers to civil war, ethnic war, and interstate war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war, such as militarised disputes, terrorism, and riots or strikes. Violent conflict involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing

claims or interests (ibid). Frère and Wilen (2015) posit that, while a violent conflict may involve only non-state actors, often, the term is used as a synonym for war, which involves at least one government. Violent conflict claims the lives of many people, destroys property, and diverts human as well as financial resources away from development. Conflicts are waged at various levels: state, regional, and local. World Bank & United Nations, (2018) highlights that violent conflict involves various actors: governments, nationalist groups, religious groups, and community or identity groups with significant backing from external forces. Violent conflicts are usually the outcome of entrenched non-violent conflicts that have been neglected or not solved at its early stage. Nevertheless, respondents suggest that violent conflicts are usually the outcome of multiple factors including; poverty, unemployment, peer pressure, social injustice, marginalisation and a host of others as is the case in Cameroon.

What makes a conflict considered violent is usually the number of casualties and destructions. Frère, M.-S and Wilen, N. (2015) suggest that; If the battle-related deaths during the course of a conflict are under 1000 they are considered as minor while between 25-1000 in one year as during a particular year in conflict are categorized as intermediate conflicts and if there are 1000 battle-related deaths during one particular year is considered as war or as a major armed conflict.

1.4. Hate Speech and Freedom of Speech

Freedom of expression and opinions are fundamental rights conferred on every human being, which forms the foundation of democracy, rule of law, peace and sustainable inclusive development and participation in public affairs. As such, it is the responsibility of states to protect and promote the rights and freedoms of opinion and expression. In the 1996 amended Constitution of Cameroonian, freedom of speech and communication is captured in the preamble. The constitutional right of free speech in Cameroon has been used as excuse to most of the perpetrators of hate speech. Since it is very difficult to separate the right to communicate from the kind of words to communicate, a huge confusion appears as perpetrators when apprehended claim they are exercising their rights.

The Genocide Convention of 1994 criminalises every word or action that incites genocide. After the Rwandan genocide, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda charged Rwanda musician Simon Bikinda for songs that propagated hatred and violence against Tutsi. Although the judges concluded that his music amplified the conflict, the judges nonetheless argued Simon Bikinda had no control over radio stations playing and dissemination of his music at the time and could not have been responsible directly. He was eventually found guilty for directly inciting using loudspeaker to exterminate Tutsi and sentenced to 15 years in prison (Montgomery, 2008).

These factors were provided by 40 interviewees
Reacting to the misuse of freedom of speech in Cameroon, the Cameroon Minister of External Relations Le Jeune Mbella Mbella in a public address “regretted that many citizens continue to misconstrue freedom of expression, to spread unconfirmed, bias, judgemental, nonexistence news, with the aim of causing instability” (Nsodzefe, 2019). Similarly, in a press statement, the US Ambassador to Cameroon Peter Henry Berlerin, highlighted that; “freedom of speech should not give room to hate speech which most Cameroonians are advocating for...” (Musa, 2018)

It is difficult to identify and punish hate speech for varied reasons:

1. Freedom of expression and speech are inalienable rights in several countries, the line between them is therefore very thin.

2. Some governments hide under the guise of tackling hate speech to clamp down on political opposition.

Nevertheless, government has successfully identified and sectioned some individuals and institutions that use their freedom of speech to spread hate which has influenced violence. Some of these sanctions include; terrorism charges, fines, bans and imprisonment. For example, the political program called “Polifocus” by Amplitude Radio in Yaoundé that was renowned for spreading hate was suspended as well as 35 journalists and media outlets by Cameroon National Communications Council (Nkenzeka, 2018)

General comment of UN Committee of Human Rights conveys that enactment of freedom of speech and expression comes with specific tasks and responsibility related to others concerns or society. Therefore, a restriction in a form of prohibition to control hate speech is considered legal, not jeopardising the right or freedom of speech and expression. The prohibition can also be implemented to propaganda threatening or resulting in an aggression towards others.

To effectively understand this within the Cameroonian context, we were able to sample sets of questions with our respondents. The respondents shared their views on the relationship between freedom of speech and hate speech, limiting free speech and the criminalisation of hate languages.
The relationship between what constitutes freedom of speech which is a fundamental right enshrined under the universal declaration of rights and in the constitutions of many countries around the world is not very clear. The evidence from this research has shown that several Cameroonians agree or somewhat agree that the exercise of freedom of speech inadvertently involves hate speech. However, the response from the central region shows otherwise. Most respondents from the Centre region somewhat disagree that freedom of speech involves hate speech. Opinions are divided on whether it should be limited in order to curb hate speech. For instance, many within Littoral, Northwest and Southwest regions overwhelmingly reject the idea that free speech should be limited in order to curb the rise of hate speech. The Far North and Centre regions however, think that limiting free speech is necessary for clamping down on the rise of hate speech. It is worth noting that the current crisis is predominantly within the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country which is a geographically English-speaking territory and therefore comes as no surprise that majority of the respondents within these regions overwhelmingly reject the idea that freedom of speech should be limited in order to curb hate speech. Similarly, respondents from the Far North, and Centre regions which is a Francophone region supported the idea of limiting freedom of speech in order to clamp down on the spread of hate speech. To a large extent, it can be deduced that the current crises could have influenced the responses especially considering the sharp contrast in responses from the Anglophone and Francophone regions. The analysis is therefore represented in the figure 3 below.

Source: Researchers’ generated data, 2019
Closely related to this analysis is the graphics in figure 2 above where respondents overwhelmingly agreed or somewhat agree across the five regions of the country that freedom of speech involves hate speech, it is necessary to restrict and possibly criminalise certain languages to prevent the spread of hate language in the country. Though most respondents in figure 3 did not agree on limiting freedom of speech to curb hate speech, they rather preferred that certain languages, words or phrases should be restricted or possibly criminalised to reduce the spread of hate speech. This is equally represented in figure 4 below.
PART TWO

MANIFESTATION OF HATE SPEECH IN CAMEROON

The use of inflammatory words and phrases during conversations, arguments or debates in Cameroon is not new. The use of hate speech in Cameroon became popular as early as the independence era and the birth of democracy. Politicians, administrators and civilians used it commonly. The speech contributed in fanning the flames of political violence that sparked up in the early independent and democratic days of Cameroon. A respondent posit that, the famous Makiza phenomenon (Bamileke war) which was influenced by grievances build on hate and marginalisation of the Bamileke people dates back to the pre-independence era but the colonial administration used the big whip to manage its negative manifestation. Speaking to some of the respondents, they shared most of the hate speeches that characterised the early days of the country including:

- Bamilekes are very business inclined and financially powerful, they should not be given opportunity for political leadership of the country.
- North Westerners are Cam no go
- Bangwa 99 sense
- Les Anglophones sont toujours à gauche (Anglophones are always on the left)

The use of words like; Le Bamenda, Biafra, Anglo-fou, Franco-frog, Terrorist, Bamileke, and many others have been in the diction of young and old Cameroonians, women and men, government officials and citizens since the colonial days till present date. These words are used derogatorily in most cases with the intention to cause harm to the receiver/target/victims, while they are also used sometimes as a sense of humour during peer conversations. Reports and popular opinions suggest that the prevalence and manifestation of hate speech has contributed in weaponising the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North region and the recent unrest in the Northwest and the Southwest regions of Cameroon. From print media to social media and mass media, hate speech and incitement to hatred, fake news, use of discriminatory messaging even between and among opinion leaders, use of inflammatory and offensive words have been used to sustain the current conflict in Cameroon in many ways. The absence of counter narratives and alternative narratives to discriminatory and hate speeches online and offline has made finding a lasting solution to the current crisis almost impossible to come by. During the recent visit of Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, she attests in her report that “I am also concerned by alarming instances of hate speech, including by political leaders, as well as serious restrictions on the political space, with prosecutions in a military court of a number of members of opposition parties,” (Miles, 2019).

---

4 Interview with James a scholar from Bamileke community. April 2019
Similarly, during the 2018 pre-election process hate speech was greatly manifested by mass communication platforms including radio, TV and Newspaper. A report by Voice of America captured a clear example of hate language; “Amplitude FM, a radio station in Cameroon’s capital Yaoundé, which told potential voters to be ready for carnage that will spread all over the central African state should its president, Paul Biya, be re-elected in October 7. The broadcaster says that after 36 years as head of state, Biya should peacefully hand over power - and if he doesn’t - be forced to do so” (Nkenzeka, 2018).

### 2.1. Key Hate Speech Terms and phrases in Cameroon

In Cameroon, several terms could generally be regarded as hate speech within a given context. Decades ago, the attention on the impact of hate speech was very inconsiderable and was neglected both in policy and action. This gave legitimacy to users of the terms, thus making receiver victims who felt no one cares about how they feel.

Our findings during this research identified terms as most recurrent both online and offline. These terms collaborate with an earlier compilation by Peace Tech Lab in the Lexicon of Hate Terms in Cameroon. For the purposes of this research, we reproduce some of these key terms and their resultant meanings and illustrate with examples how they have contributed to worsening crisis in the Far North, Northwest and the South West regions of the country. It should be noted that these words are neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

Source: Word Cloud generated by researchers
2.1.1. Anglofools

This term is predominantly used by French Cameroonians to refer to Anglophone Cameroonians in derogatory ways. Literally, the term implies that Anglophone Cameroonians are fools, stupid, or behave foolishly. Related terms used include Anglo-fou, Anglo-foufou, anglos. This word has been in the dictionary of Cameroonians since the early 1990s and became widely used mostly in French speaking cities.

Post Examples:

Source: Screenshot from Twitter post

The term Anglofool or Anglo-fou have been used to refer to Anglophones in Cameroon in many contexts and in many platforms both offline and online. Just like it has been seen above, numerous Facebook group messages as well as Twitter chats and WhatsApp messages carry this term which is always used to victimise or dehumanise Anglophones based on lifestyles, culture and/or prejudices about Anglophone Cameroonians living in the Northwest and the South West regions of the country. One of our respondents attests that “I have been called several times like this in Yaoundé... I feel like my heart is falling when I am referred like that especially that I work hard to serve Cameroon”.

2.1.2. Franco-frog

The term signifies that Francophone Cameroonians are noisy, arrogant and dull or stupid. It is predominantly used by Anglophone Cameroonians to refer to Francophone Cameroonians in a derogatory manner, usually in reaction or retaliation to the term Anglofool. The term Franco-frog is just as dehumanising as the term Anglofool and when used it conveys a message to the individual or

---

5 Interview with Erick based in Yaoundé, 22nd June 2019
6 Phone call interview, an Anglophone in the diaspora, 23rd June 2019
group as being arrogant, noisy, empty vessel. This term became widely used very recently with the outbreak of the Anglophone crises. Though the term is not widely used offline, there is a huge community: anglophile Cameroonians in the diaspora.

**Post Examples:**

![Facebook post example](image)

Source: Screenshot from Facebook post

### 2.1.3. *Cam no go/ Graffi*

CAM NO GO is an expression in the ‘pidgin’ language which stands for something or someone who is a visitor or settles somewhere but it/he/she never leaves. The term emerged in 1996 when the then Governor of the South West region of Cameroon in a public speech to refer to settler of his region who hailed from the North West Region. One of our respondent shared that the word was triggered by grievances bored by South Westerners because most of the North westerners who settled in the South West had become very successful, owning lands, properties and working in the plantations. The outbreak of the Anglophone crises saw the re-emergence of this term as Anglophone critics of the Anglophone crisis claimed the North Westerners residing in their South West are the ones fomenting the violence. This word is widely used among English Speaking Cameroonians and most recently by a wide range of people from both sides of the country to incite infighting by creating a divide.

Also the term Graffi is usually used on social media alongside “Came no go”. It is derived from the word “grass field” one of the geo-political parts of Cameroon, and has been used to describe people from the Northwest and West Regions of Cameroon. This term is used by both Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians to refer to people from this region basically because of their socio-cultural lifestyle and attitude. “I use it to demonstrate that the person is
uncivilised, dirty, greedy, uncultured, and stingy” said Atangana. People from the North West when referred to this way find it offensive because it is mostly used to refer to them as foreigners. This word is also inflammatory in the way it’s used and the meaning derived from the context. It can also be used to demonstrate that the target is uncivilised, greedy, uncultured, and stingy.

**Post Examples:**

![Image of Facebook posts](image)

Source: Facebook post by activist

---

7 Interview with Atangana a Cameroonian from Centre Region. 15th April 2019
2.1.4. **Les Bamenda**

The term has been generally used to refer to every English speaking Cameroonian in a derogatory way. It binds its victims to “Bamenda” a city (regional capital) in the North West region of Cameroon. The word is used to group all English speakers and present them as a homogenous group which is different from French speakers. It is usually used when francophones want to refer to an Anglophone with derogatory characters such as; stupid, low class, backward. This term was identified as the most reoccurring term used offline which is pejorative to English speaking Cameroonians. One of the French speaking respondents shared that he uses “le Bamenda” to refer to his domestic help and nanny at home. Les Bamenda” is also used to describe an Anglophone who, faced with a situation of injustice or marginalisation, confronts the person involved out rightly, claiming his rights. Under such circumstances, the response usually given is ‘n’ammene pas votre Bamenda ici’ or ‘nous ne somme pas a Bamenda ici’

**Post Example:**

![Twitter post](image)

Source: Twitter post

2.1.5. **Boko Haram**

The term Boko Haram means “Western Education is forbidden”. The word originated in Nigeria used by Muhammad Yusuf to name his violent extremist group founded in 2002. In 2014 the use of this word spread into Cameroon as the terrorist group began their insurgency in the Far North Region of Cameroon. They adopted the name Boko Haram which targeted individuals within the region who were attending western education. The name of the terrorist movement which was embedded with hate imbibes a radical ideology against western education and circular lifestyle within the region and contributed to the radicalisation of hundreds of people into their ranks. Schools and Christian

---

8 Interview with John French speaker in Yaoundé 10 April 2019
worship houses became targets of suicide bombing and shooting as a result of this hate message.

Nevertheless, this term became a household name especially in the other regions of the country as it was used to identify Muslims and people from the Grand North region of Cameroon. Categorising a group of people using the name of a terrorist movement because of their religion or geographical location is not just inflammatory and offensive, but it is wrong because terrorism is about a tribe or a religion or an area but an act from an individual or group.

2.1.6. **Terrorist**

The use of the word terrorist only emerged publicly in Cameroon in 2014 with the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North of Cameroon. It was used specifically to categorise the violent extremist who perpetrated violence in the region. This affected legislation as in 2014 an Anti-Terrorism Law was enacted. Unfortunately, as time unfolded this word became misused by government to tag individuals on the one hand and citizens to tag government actions of individuals usually in cases when violence is perpetrated. Terrorism is a serious crime in Cameroon like elsewhere so no individual or group is to be tagged ‘Terrorist’ as it already targets someone as being unlawful, violent, and extremist and many other negative attributes which are not good. Most recently the use of the word by separatist to champion propaganda against the government has become very rampant on social media. Government Ministers, public authorities as well as security forces are mostly referred on social media as terrorist. The proponents suggest that it is in response to their perceived violence committed by the groups. People from the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon (Anglophones) are also called terrorist, secessionists, separatists.

**Post Examples:**

Source: Twitter and Facebook post
2.2. Prevalence and use of hate speech in Cameroon

As mentioned in the introductory parts of the work, hate speech has increasingly become a major problem in Cameroon. In order to be able to capture and confirm the existence and use of inflammatory languages in Cameroon, a survey was carried out through questionnaires while a focus group discussion was also carried as well. Among the over 130 people diversely selected based on their understanding of the topic and location, were people from 5 of the 10 regions of Cameroon and few from the diaspora. These respondents also included adults, women and youths from different walks of life, academia, government, social media influencers and celebrities, as well as some students.

The map below presents an idea on the prevalence and use of hate speech across the 10 regions of Cameroon.
In order to be able to further capture and confirm the existence and prevalence of inflammatory/derogatory/offensive languages in Cameroon, a survey was equally used to understand whether or not respondents from the selected group and geographical location affirm the use and prevalence of messages considered
offensive, derogatory or inflammatory on other people or groups. (See figure 5 and 6 below).

**Figure 5: Prevalence of hate speech in Cameroon**

In understanding the prevalence of hate speech from the perspective of respondents across the regions of Cameroon, our sample population all confirmed that hate speech is a real deal. Evidence from all the respondents somewhat agreed on this, though we noticed the degree varies per regions. The Southwest suffers a higher thread of hate speech. Meanwhile, although respondents in the centre think hate speech is prevalent; their idea of how prevalent the phenomenon is; is relatively lower when compared with the other regions of the country. Many respondents in the Northwest as well as those in the Far North think hate speech is prevalent in Cameroon.

Source: Researchers’ generated data, 2019
Respondents from all the five regions admitted using words or language that can be considered inflammatory, derogatory or offensive towards other groups. This is most prevalent in the Northwest and the Centre regions where 21 respondents admitted using hate language. In the Far North and the Littoral regions 20 respondents admitted using hate speech closely followed by Southwest Region where 18 respondents equally admitted using hate speech. Very small number in both regions sampled either did not admit using hate words or did not know whether they use such words on individuals or groups other than their own.

Analysing this result across the selected five regions of the country, it can be deduced that hate speech is very prevalent across Cameroon. From the data presented above, more than 54.8% of the respondents across the various regions admitted to using hate speech. Within the context of the on-going “Anglophone crises” which has been fuelled mainly using hate language, it comes as no surprise that the data underscored a prevalent increase in hate speech across.

After confirming that hate speech exist in Cameroon, though it varies from region to region, there was the need for us to establish which group of people in Cameroon perpetrate the use of hate speech the most while equally bringing out the most targeted groups (victims) of hate speech in the country. Figure 7 and 8 below illustrates the findings.

Source: Researchers’ generated data, 2019
From the findings above, three (3) regions out of five (5) identified the government as the group that uses the most hate speech in Cameroon. These regions are Northwest, Southwest and the Far North. Government as used in this research refers to the president, members of parliament, state ministers and secretaries, local government representatives and other persons, appointed or acting on behalf of the President and the Republic. Aside the government, there are differing opinions on who uses more hate language with each region offering differing opinions. For instance, in the Northwest region, many think that aside the government, ordinary citizens and members of the forces of law and order such as the police and military are the second and third groups of people who use hate language. In the Southwest region however, forces of law and order as well as religious and traditional authorities were fingered as the bodies that employ the most hate language after the government. However, in the Far North region, religious and traditional organisations were identified as using more hate language alongside the government. While those in the Littoral Region think ordinary citizens use more hate speech than the government, forces of law and order and religious and traditional organisations. Those in the centre region attribute the predominant use of hate speech to civil servants.

It is worth noting that in order to understand the response of these regions, the geographical and cultural attributes of the regions must be considered when analysing this data. For instance, the respondents in the Northwest and Southwest regions which are home to the current Anglophone crises have all agreed in the majority that the government uses hate speech than any other group. It remains however unclear if the grievances of the Anglophones which has often been blamed on the actions of the government could have influenced
these responses. On the other hand, people in the centre and Littoral regions, which are dominated by Francophone, do not consider the government to be the organisation that uses the most hate language.

**Figure 7: Victims of hate speech in the past**

![Bar chart showing the number of victims of hate speech in different regions.](image)

Source: Researchers’ generated data, 2019

The findings of the research confirm this assertion that across all the regions, over 80% of the respondents have been subjected to some form of hate language. However, the number of victims of hate language differs from one region to the other. For instance, while several people in the Northwest and Far North have been victims of hate language, North Westerners claimed that they have been mostly victimised when they are outside their regions of origin while Northerners claim they suffer the hate mostly within the region and within other regions. Combining these findings to the earlier section that analysed whether the respondents have used hate language in the past, it can be observed that the numbers of respondents who have used hate language or are victims of it are relatively lower compared to the others.

### 2.3. How does Hate Speech lead to Violent Conflict in Cameroon?

While covering a wide range of hate speech terms and speaking to respondents on the process involved, we found out 3 key terms: Derogatory, inflammatory and offensive in the process of hate speech leading to violent conflict. To understand this perfectly, we have sampled some examples of expressions used online and offline in Cameroon and presented respondents’ reaction to these terms. The sketch below will illustrate how damaging the identified hate words can be on an individual or groups.
Figure 8.1: Outcome of a Derogatory Hate Speech

Figure 8.2: Outcome of an Inflammatory Hate Speech

Figure 8.3: Outcome of an Offensive Hate Speech
In Cameroon, acts of violence have been committed both online and offline and they have instigated a lot of physical violence in the space of 5 years. A lot of hate speech and propaganda have been disseminated online through numerous Facebook pages and twitter accounts as well as online and offline TV channels among many other online and offline platforms.

As illustrated in figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 above, radicalisation takes place when hate speech is used on an individual (victim/target) thus increasing the chances of a non-violent person to engage in an act of violence. To confirm this assertion, a survey was sampled to find out if nonviolent people can be instigated to commit violence through hate speech. See figure 9 below.

**Figure 9: Can nonviolent people be incited to violence through hate speech?**

![Figure 9: Can nonviolent people be incited to violence through hate speech?](image)

**Source: Researchers’ generated data, 2019**

Respondents across the five regions sampled for the purpose of this research overwhelmingly agreed that hate speech has the potential to incite non-violent people to engage in violent activities. The evidence as depicted in figure 9 above therefore supports the assertion that if measures are not put in place to curb the rise of hate language in Cameroon, it could radicalise non-violent people and possibly make a peaceful resolution of violent conflicts difficult.
PART THREE

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN PREVENTING/COUNTERING HATE SPEECH IN CAMEROON

The devastating effect of hate speech has been evident in several countries across the globe. The Rwandan genocide, the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, the Bosnian conflict and the genocide in Germany are notable international catastrophes fuelled and sustained by hate speech. In all these instances, millions were killed, several millions more were displaced, and billions of dollars of properties were lost.

In view of the on-going crises in Cameroon, it is imperative that some actions are taken to immediately bring the conflict to an end. More importantly, it is also imperative that necessary steps are taken to ensure that these crises do not occur in the future. In light of our findings, we suggest some recommendations that policy makers could adopt to respond to the crisis in Cameroon and prevent it from further escalation. Mark Albon Director of Commonwealth CVE Unit shares that;

_Hate and intolerance are the currency of violent extremism. We must make it ‘our common cause’ to offer strong alternative narratives that emphasise people’s fundamental human rights, build inclusivity in our societies and diminish the efforts of those who would seek to sow division and discord across the world._

Fighting hate speech must be a collective process. In our quest to answer the question on which stakeholder should be most involved in the fight against hate speech in Cameroon, we sampled 135 people from the Southwest, Northwest, Centre, Littoral and the Far North regions to get opinion on who our recommendations should focus on. We also gathered information through a focus group discussion made of 40 participants as well as via online interviews with Cameroonians from the selected regions living abroad. The recommendations from some 30 youth influencers (bloggers, musicians, comedians, spoken word artists, poets, journalist, politicians, film makers/actors/, cartoonists and civil society activist) will also be constituted in this part of the work.

Figure ten below will orientate us on the basis of our recommendations and the different stakeholders we should bring on-board the efforts to prevent the spread of hate speech through counter/new and alternative narratives.

---

In the Far North region of Cameroon, traditional and religious authorities, young people, and government, are identified as major stakeholders in curbing issues of hate speech. On the other hand, in the Southwest and Centre regions, the government and youths as the foremost institutions responsible for maintaining combating hate speech. However, respondents in the Northwest region wants the Forces of law and order such as the police, military and courts to play the lead role in preventing the dominance of hate speech in the country. Conclusively the above date highlights that young people are averagely the principal stakeholders in combating hate speech. A respondent claim that “Young people make of 70%of the country’s population, they suffer the most as victims, thus they are rightfully place to mobilise their peers, collaborate with other stakeholders to end hate speech in Cameroon”

3.1. Youths Countering Hate Speech In Cameroon

The role of young people in building peace cannot be over emphasised. The adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on youth peace and security and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2419 on youth and peace process only come to legitimise the amazing efforts young people have made in building peace.

In Cameroon, with the rise of violence and insecurity, Young Cameroonians though victims of the outcomes of these conflicts have demonstrated resilience in preventing violence and building peace. Through Social groupings, young
Cameroonian have mobilised themselves to build their capacity and put up a collaborative voice to end the drivers of violence across the country, of which hate speech has been their main target.

In response to this, our organisation; Local Youth Corner Cameroon designed the Spread Love Campaign which provides young people from different walks of life including celebrities to become Ambassadors with the capacity of designing and implementing initiatives to prevent, counter and provide alternatives and new narratives to hate speech. The edition of this initiative trained 30 Spread Love Ambassadors, supported the creation of 30 Spread Love Clubs in secondary and primary Schools, developed music, arts, slam, radio, television and social media contents which has been used to sensitise over 500000 people across the country.

Among the 30 young influencers (social media influencers, artist, musicians, comedians, bloggers, spoken word artist, teachers, students, journalist and government officials) we trained through the … project funded by Nexus Fund and support from Commonwealth CVE Unit, we shall be highlighting 8 of these Ambassadors whose efforts and participation have developed commitment in being innovative in preventing hate speech in Cameroon.

3.1.1. Eight Youth-led Positive Practices in to Preventing Hate Speech

1. Ebigwe Johnson Agbenjang (aka Father Ebigwe)

Father Ebigwe as he is popularly called is a stand up gospel comedian, an actor and an activist. He uses gospel comedy to edify Christians through biblical allusions and linking it with the challenges of hate, violence, and insecurity plaguing host communities of internally displaced persons in the littoral region of Cameroon. Ebigwe demonstrated leadership by mobilising his peers in the movie and comedy industry to do mass sensitisation in schools, on the streets, in community groups to encourage love among victims and host communities. He has played an exceptional role by reaching out to secondary schools and students and creating 10 Spread Love Clubs within his region. His commitment earned him the recognition as outstanding Spread Love Ambassador Read more Here.
2. Alunge Nnangsope Macouley (aka Mac Alunge)

Mac Alunge, is a celebrated professional spoken word artist from the Southwest Region of Cameroon. Marked developed a campaign; “Soldier” which he reaches out to young people in schools, churches, concerts and different platforms off and online to advocate for love between the victims and perpetrators of violence, using his rhyme scheme to imbibe values into people while they enjoy his eloquence and passion. Alunge has also created eight Spread Love Clubs in some of the schools he visited. Here is a report on his work Read.
3. Christian Best Besseck (aka Senior Pastor)

Christian is an award winning Cameroonian comedian and founder of Chris Comedy Factory. Christian discovered a new dimension of his talent; “comedy as a tool for peace” during his training as a Spread Love Ambassador. Christian collaborated with our organisation to initiate the Laughter Heals Comedy Show which is a yearly stand-up comedy show which unites English and French speaking comedians in Cameroon to condemn hate and advocate for peace. The first edition successfully mobilised over 900 Cameroonians of diverse cultures and backgrounds including 150 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), to laugh and heal psychosocial stress while building tolerance and spreading love through comedy. Here is a BBC Pidgin News Report of the Show: [Watch](image)

![Image of Laughter Heals Comedy Show, May 26, 2019 Yaoundé, Cameroon](image)

4. Ayuk Renette

Renette is a storyteller and journalist for the national television Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV). As part of her commitment to combat hate and promote peace she initiated the; ‘ARMS TALK’; a storytelling competition were young people are given the opportunity for victims of hate and other social ills to tell their stories to inspire the public. Her show was aired on National television and has contributed in raising awareness. Renette who is based in Yaoundé; one of the host communities of displaced people from the North west and South west believe her story telling platform will contribute in spreading love into
According to her, stories are weapons and if used rightly, can go a long way in affecting society positively through community engagement. Read more about her work: [Here](#).

“Hate speech has robbed so many of self-esteem. But when victims and witnesses tell their stories, they heal and empower their community”

---

### 5. Nyassa Dobgima

Nyassa Dobgima is a musician and producer from the North West Region. During his participation during the training, the young musician recounted to his peers how he saw the light and a better purpose of his talent. He committed to write and produce a song which will serve as a comforting tool and bringing enemies together, promote tolerance and peace. One week after the training, he produced a song; ‘Hate Nobody’ [Check out the Demo; Here](#). The song though in the demo version has become very popular as he has performed it in 5 public events organised by government and other development partners. He was the lead artist for the national caravan against hate speech, drug and peace organised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education.
Dobgima, performing the ‘Hate Nobody’ Song in an audience of over 2000 people in Nkolda, Yaoundé and in the presence of the Minister of Youth Affair and Civic Education

6. Djouwairatou

Djouwairatou is an activist from the Far North Region of Cameroon. Her involvement in peace building was inspired by her experience of the ravaging effect of the Boko Haram insurgency in her community. After her training, she has engaged in community sensitisation against hate speech in hot spot areas and also has engaged students in discussing on how to end hate speech and build peace. Laila has created 4 spread love clubs in secondary schools across the region.

Images of spread love campaign in Maroua, Far North Region of Cameroon, 2019
7. Emmanuel Ayuk Bate And Vershiyi Clarisse

Vershiyi Clarisse (Social entrepreneur) and Emmanuel Ayuk Bate (Celebrated Stand-up Comedian) teamed up in the capital city of Cameroon to prevent hate speech in schools across the region specifically in communities hosting Internally Displaced Persons from the North West and South West regions. At a time when hate speech has become the order of the day, especially in Cameroonian urban centres like Yaoundé and people seem to forget the value of love; our Spread Love Ambassadors Vershiyi Clarisse (Social entrepreneur) and Emmanuel Ayuk Bate (Comedian) visited Secondary schools using comedy and theatre to sensitize the students against Hate Speech. They developed a theatre piece; "Christianity is in the Heart", which they used and the students acted and sensitised their peers.

Image of sensitisation of Children in bilingual school in Yaoundé

8. Akwo Kelvin

Akwo Kelvin is a secondary school teacher from the Northwest Region of Cameroon. After his training as a Spread Love Ambassador, he committed to using community radio in his conflict affected region to sensitised the population on the influence of fake news, propaganda and disinformation. Through a youth-focus programme called "Youth Horizons" held every Saturday. Kelvin uses the platform to highlight the importance of reconciliation and the importance of showing love to one another in times of conflict. Kelvin equally educates his students and his fellow teachers not to propagate hate messages in school.
3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the purpose of this research, recommendations proposed have been compiled through contributions from different stakeholders including Youth influencers, the 135 questionnaire respondents, the 40 focus group participants, the 10 online interviewees in the diaspora among others. For better understanding by all stakeholders involved in reducing the impact of hate speech in Cameroon’s conflict situations and even preventing it from being used in the future, these recommendations have been divided into: the government, the forces of law and order, traditional authorities and religious leaders, the media and the civil society. According to the findings, the State has the primary responsibility to protect populations and prevent the spread of hate speech; however, many other actors can play an important role.

3.2.1. Role of the Government

The government of Cameroon have been identified as one of the main actors to fully engage in the fight against hate speech online and offline. Below are some recommendations that the government can adopt to add to existing actions in the struggle to prevent hate speech. The government should:

- Create a national emergency mechanism to identify and address potential areas of conflict and assist to prevent it from escalating. This mechanism can equally be charged with the identification and sanctioning of hate languages across the country.
- Institute legislation and legal mechanisms to punish people who use hate language against other groups. Such hate languages can be debated and adopted in parliament and/or the senate.
- Organize a semi-public referendum to decide on the identified hate terms that should be prohibited from usage across the national territory and sanctions equally debated in parliament and enacted as law to curb hate speech.

- Create mechanisms with environments that encourage victims and/or witnesses to report hate speech related crimes. This is essential because hate speech remains invisible simply because many victims do not know where to report the cases or even understand that they are victims of hate speech.

- Promote media pluralism, including the right of national, racial, religious and ethnic minorities to freely access and use media and information and communications technologies for the production and circulation of their own content as well as for the reception of content produced by others.

3.2.2. The role of the Civil Society, Non-governmental Organisations and International Non-governmental Organisations

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International organisations (INGOs) are strong partners of the government as far as preventing and countering hate speech and violent extremism are concerned.

- Introduce or reinforce cross-cultural exchanges between people from different regions of the country and people from other countries that have experienced the effect of hate speech to share their different experiences with lessons learned.

- NGOs can monitor the media for instances of hate speech, while also using the media to respond to particular cases of hate speech and to advance the fight against discrimination and hate crime.

- A significant barrier to forces of law and order in investigating hate speech that appear to violate laws is the lack of training on the technical issues involved in identifying who is responsible and where those sites originate and proving who is responsible for the content. CSOs, NGOs and INGOs may be able to supplement investigations by providing technical expertise to train police officers and other government peace building stakeholders on these issues. These organisations can also play a major role in providing training and other educational materials against hate speech online and through social media.

- NGOs have been responsible for the closure of websites dedicated to hate speech. They have done so through direct intervention with service providers and government agencies and bringing legal action. NGOs have been successful in persuading online authors, owners or Internet service providers to remove hate sites and discriminatory expressions from the Internet, particularly in states with hate-speech laws. In the case of Cameroon where there exists no legislation on hate speech, NGOs can work with government agencies and internet service providers (Camtel,
MTN, etc.) and social networks (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) to delimit or prohibit the use of certain languages in the context of Cameroon.

- Organisations could work with government and intergovernmental agencies to develop and implement deliberate policies through sports, cultural competitions and educational activities like quiz and essay competitions among different regions of the country to promote cohesion among the different cultural groups in Cameroon.

- Organize a rigorous nationwide education campaign targeted at various groups ranging from students, traders and market women, public sector employees, traditional and religious organizations as well security institutions. The education campaign must include messages that promote harmony among different groups within the country. This campaign should make use of all communication mediums online and offline as well as enable the creation of contents through music, comedy, poetry, films, art work, etc.

### 3.2.3. The Role of Traditional and religious Leaders

Religious leaders have a strong potential to influence the lives and behaviour of those who follow their faith and share their beliefs. When they speak out, their messages can have a strong and wide-ranging impact. Traditional and Religious leaders have an important role to play by speaking out against hate speech and ethnically motivated violence. Religious and traditional leaders can play a major role by:

- Spreading messages of peace, tolerance, acceptance and mutual respect and by taking action to reduce tensions between communities.
- Disseminating positive and alternative speech online and offline; ensure that counter and alternative messages are disseminated in local languages, including in local dialects.
- Issuing and circulating reports of religious statements and decrees by religious leaders and authorities denouncing incitement and/or offering alternative messages.
- Organising community level initiatives such as ‘cultural weeks’ and form rapid response networks. Disseminate messages in various forms, including through press conferences, press statements, blogs, videos, films, music and visual art.
- Building robust multi-faith social action campaigns to prevent and curb incitement to violence. Ensure campaign leaders are diverse faith actors (women, young people, and people of different professions).
- Disseminate information about activities aimed at alternative narratives.
- Engage youth, including through inter-religious justice-focused initiatives, in tackling injustice in a constructive way.
● Listen to and address grievances of the youth, even when what they say is shocking or controversial.
● Advocate with state institutions and the private sector on the importance of providing youth with economic opportunities and vocational training.
● Identifying and training “youth ambassadors” to become dedicated actors and peer-educators in countering radicalization and violent extremism.

3.2.4. The role of the forces of Law and Order

● Build trust and cooperation through collaboration with local administrative and religious authorities as well as the civilian population.

3.2.5. The Role of the Media and Journalists

The media when properly used can help in promoting human rights, combat violence, building trust and reconciliation of conflicting groups but when wrongly used, it can also create tension, intolerance and hatred. The Cameroon media have had great impact in the current crises in the country and can still greatly contribute in fighting against the dissemination of hate messages online and offline.

● The media should create an environment where persuasion could be developed. That is not as an actor that reports stories of hate but addresses them and raises awareness and for advocating diversity. In doing this, it is important for the media to be kept independent from Government.
● Journalists should leverage on the availability of television and TV programs to produce content on alternative and new narratives to be broadcasted along national and international Medias.
● Establish Monitoring and Evaluation platforms in newsrooms to monitor hate speech trends, compile reports and bring to the attention of key institutions and Civil Society.
● Train journalists on conflict sensitive reporting.
● Organize a rigorous nationwide education campaign targeted at various groups ranging from students, traders and market women, public sector employees, traditional and religious organizations as well security institutions. The education campaign must include messages that promote harmony among different groups within the country. This campaign should make use of all communication mediums online and offline as well as enable the creation of contents through music, comedy, poetry, films, art work, etc.
● The media can also be a venue for public debate, which is necessary in a democratic society. Such debates can have positive effect for relieving
tension and create a balance between the interests of the majority and minority groups in society.

- The media should engage in the battle against prejudice and its consequences; opposing prejudice instead of spreading it.
- Encourage the media to publicise positive stories of religious and secular actors who have countered violent extremist narratives, as well as news and information about initiatives aimed at enhancing respect and peaceful coexistence.
- Engage with traditional and new media organizations to counter prejudices and false rumours.
- Engage popular social media organizations, including Facebook and Twitter, as active partners in advocacy to support counter speech and alternative narrative campaigns.

3.3. SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In all questionnaires were administered to 135 respondents across 5 regions of Cameroon (Far North, Southwest, Northwest, Centre, and Littoral) and over 40 other people were interviewed through focussed group discussions and online interviews. There was a general agreement that hate speech fuels violent conflict. The research shows a growing use of hate speech in Cameroon with several individuals admitting to using hate language in the past against people from others. The research further observes that people in the Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon turn to be the most affected regions in terms of number of hate speech victims as well as the context of use. Nevertheless, respondents across the five regions admitted to being victims of hate speech in Cameroon in the past. Cameroonians answered in the affirmative that hate speech is increasingly on the rise in the country.

Quite surprisingly, three out of the five regions in Cameroon identified the government as the key organisation that uses the most hate language in the country. It’s worth noting that while respondent in the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country geographically located in the Anglophone regions where the current crises is on-going identified the government as the institution that uses the most hate speech. On the other hand, two regions which were in the francophone regions of the country fingered ordinary citizens and the civil servants as the people that use the most hate language in the country. The idea of this research is not to point a finger at any institution. However, we are mindful of the fact that it is imperative to identify key institutions that carry out these hate speeches hence any solutions aimed at tackling the rise of hate must target these institutions. This research has equally identified clearly, the relationship between hate speech and violence and its ability to incite otherwise non-violent people to engage in violence. Majority of the people across the five regions say they have not been motivated to engage in violent activities. These findings
confirm a grey finding in the literature that proves a great difficulty in finding a direct link between hate speech and violent conflict. Overall, this research has exposed the growing prevalence of hate speech around the country that requires an urgent solution to prevent it from escalating.
Mr ACHALEKE Decorates Mrs Yvonne Matuturu of UNESCO-Cameroon with the Spread Love badge as a Champion in the fight against hate speech in Cameroon
SELECTED REFERENCES


Head Office
Biyem-Assi Lac, Yaounde Cameroon
Email: info@loyocameroon.org
Web: www.loyocameroon.org
Post Box: 185-C106 Yaounde Cameroon.
Tel: +237 222-313-920/650-906-256