Gender Equality, Legislative Recruitment Process and Selection of other Political Executives in Modern Politics: Empirical Evidence from Cameroon

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ABSTRACT— *With the return to multi-party politics in the early 1990's, the issue of the representation of women and their participation in the political process has become increasingly relevant in Cameroon. It has attracted increasing interest from social scientists due to the fact that a key test of modernization is supposed to be the position of women in relation to the rhetoric that constructing an image of strong protective masculinity for political leaders, or holder of important decisions making positions. Advocacy for affirmative action mechanisms that can increase representation of women, such as the quotas system, is becoming an integral part of the debate regarding the modernization of the political system built on the principle of gender equality. This paper assesses how closely do political elites mirror the characteristics of the population they represent in connection to the extent political structures are gendered when it comes to the legislative recruitment process and selection of other public and political executives in Cameroon. The paper argues that the ultimate goal of gender equality is to ensure that democracy and its institutions are truly inclusive, and able to solve today's problem of women's political rights through dialogue, consensus, compromise and equal participation. The paper finds that the selection of both women and men in the legislative recruitment process, or selection of public office holder, is a sine qua non condition for a peaceful and successful inclusive democracy. It finally finds that, a shift from the current voluntary quotas system to a compulsory one will reduce obstacles inherent in some customs, traditions and party politics that impede women representation.*

Keywords— Gender equality, legislative recruitment, selection, political executives
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1. INTRODUCTION

With the return to multi-party politics in the early 1990's, the issue of the representation of women and their participation in the political process has become increasingly relevant in Cameroon. Although gender have been commonly used as a variable than an analytical tool, more recent theoretical work in comparative research, overlapping with feminist international relations and women's studies, has started to examine the possible gendered nature of policy, bureaucracies, and the State (Beckwith, 2010[1]; Vogel, 2011[2]: 234). This article addresses the problematic of gender equality in the legislative recruitment process and selection of other public and political executives in Cameroon. Gender refers to the socially constructed differences as well as psychological attributes and relations between men and women which are learned by individuals through the socialization process, vary widely among societies and cultures, and change over time (Oakley, 1972[3]).

The term gender[i] does not replace the term sex, which refers exclusively to biological differences between men and women. For example, statistical data are broken down by sex, which is not a pure social construction, but a natural distinction between men and women (Agacinski[ii], 2012[4]). The term gender is used to analyze the roles, constraints, opportunities and needs of women and men in all areas and in any given social context. Gender roles are learned behaviors in a given society, community or other social group (UNESCO, 2000:6[5]). Gender analysis is a tool to diagnose access to and control over resources, and access to development benefits and decision-making. It is the first step in gender-sensitive planning for promoting gender equality or balance. Therefore, "gender equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behavior, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities"[iii].

The legislative recruitment process refers to the process by which individuals move from meeting the legal criteria to serve to actually serving in parliament (Matland in International IDEA, 2005: 93[6]). Selection of other political executives or government members and their immediate subordinates as well as assimilates has usually been and informal process that took place at the Presidency or the President's private residence. It is also known as domain of discretionary power of the Chief Executive all over the world. There is always a reservoir or basket of talents and readiness that might be tapped, generally members of the Central Committee of the party. The ruling party significance in terms of staffing top political executive positions in the government cannot be undermined in Cameroon. Putting in relation these concepts is acknowledging that gender has to do with the recognition of equality as active principle of politics. The article intends to address how closely political elites mirror the characteristics of the population they represent with emphasis on gender equality.

In fact, the use of gender as an analytic category is becoming integral both to the output of Cameroonian social researchers or political scientists and the emergence of the networked community of scholars versed in the field of gender studies (Nkwi, 1985[7]; Konde, 1990[8]; Sindjoun, 2000[9]; Endeley & Ardener, 2004[10]). However, the systematic investigation of the struggle for gender equality remain an area of continuing relevance to any quest for a holistic understanding of politics in contemporary Cameroon, as indeed, in every other part of the World. It can be argued that it is an arena whose construction is a permanent work in progress (Norris & Lovenduski, 1993[11], Phillips, 1995[12]; Young, 2002[13]). And yet, the general, instinctive but misleading assumption has persisted, even in otherwise knowledgeable circles, that any reference to gender is little more than a code word for raising narrow, even parochial concerns that is specific to the interests of women only (Williams, 2000[14]; Campbell, 2000[15]; Mama, 2000[16], CODESRIA Gender Institute, 2009). It is in view to correct this enormous instinct and, in so doing; open new frontiers of reflection on gender issue in relation with political recruitment, representation or candidates' selection and democracy that we have decided to conduct this study.

Focusing on gender equality in legislative recruitment process or selection of other public and political executives will both contribute to an erosion of stereotypes about gender studies, and advance the frontiers of gendered knowledge as knowledge that is holistic. The study is also a contribution to the achievement of one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), MDG iii: "promote gender equality and empower women". In other words, we study gender equality because gender is a dimension of political under-representation both historically and currently. It is also a "useful category of historical analysis" (Scott, 1986[17]). Our interest in conducting this research also derived from the fact that there was no inclusion of gender literature in our undergraduate and graduate course, and there is no unit on gender studies on offer at our university presently. In addition, the concept of political representation, which lies at the heart of liberal democratic thinking and practice (Galligan, 2007[18]), is generally understood as a way of establishing the legitimacy of democratic institutions and creating institutional incentives for legislatures and executives to be responsive to citizens. Legislatures and executives are also both opportunity and challenge to advance theoretical and empirical understanding of some of the contradictions of the ongoing disempowering democratization process (Mkandawire, 2006[19]).

The theoretical literature on political representation has underlined that legitimacy of policies and actors who "speak for", "act for" and can even "stand for" individuals within a nation-state primary rests on the extent to which they legitimately represent some groups or larger set of social interests. Furthermore, although there is a considerable difference in usage of the term representation, most scholars seem to agree that the representativeness of a political system can, at least partly, be measured by the closeness of opinion between those who govern and those who are governed (Pitkin, 1967[20]; Achen, 1977[21]; Przeworski, Stokes & Manin, 1999[22]; Lindgren, Inkenen & Widmalm, 2009[23]; Disch, 2012[24]).The shift from one party system to multi-party politics in the 1990s raises important questions about the scope and traditional mechanisms of political representation in relation to gender equality, legislative recruitment process and selection of candidates in Cameroon. Who is involved in claiming to represent gender, and more specifically women's interests, in the political space? What are the factors which impede or can facilitate the presence of women in representatives' institutions? Does the poor representation of women the result of constructed patriarchal socio-cultural hegemonies, government policies or rivalries' among women? Does the quotas system the appropriate response to men domination within institutions or women's strategic mobilization in national politics?

There is growing evidence to indicate that female representatives in particular, although not exclusively, have been found to identify with promoting a more gender-equal society (Galligan, 2007: 557[25]). One much debated strategy for obtaining a better match between the rulers and the ruled policy preferences is therefore that of increasing the representation of women in important decision-making positions in society. According to the advocates of this strategy, increasing the number of female policy makers will not only lead to a greater awareness of women's needs but could also potentially change the way politics is done (Phillips, 1995[26]; Swers, 2001[27]). Meanwhile, others remain more skeptical about such claims. They argue that the representation of different socio-economic groups (e.g. women) does not necessary lead to a larger degree of representation of these groups' agenda (Agren, Dahlberg & Mörk, 2006: 137[28]). According to Marian Sawer, it is easier to raise doubts about the ability of men to represent women than to put the positive case concerning whether women's interests will be better represented by women. Even if agreement could be reached on the nature of women's interests or standpoints, a more representative legislature does not guarantee more effective representation of such interests (2000: 363[29]). Karpowitz et al. (2012: 533[30]) argue that numbers can

remedy inequality, but do so in interaction with the group's decision rule. Rules determine whether women benefit from larger numbers and can help women even when they are few. Inequality disappears with unanimous rule and few women, or majority rule and many women. A research conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on women and politics (2008:1[31]) finds that when women are involved in all aspects of political life, including as members of parliament (place where a country's policy direction is set), societies are more equitable and democracy is both strengthened and enhanced. This article presents strong support for the view that gender equality in legislative recruitment process and selection of candidates will increase the presence of women within institutions and will contribute to the consolidation of the democratization process in Cameroon.

Based on the constructivist paradigm, the cultural theory, new institutionalism as well as gender oriented approach and both qualitative and quantitative research methods, with data collected mainly on the following public institutions: parliament, councils, government, bureaucracy and some liberal professions; this article begins with an overview of the historical background and the timid reality of gender balance. This is followed by the exploration of obstacles which impede or can facilitate female recruitment, or selection and the discourse on affirmative action mechanisms such as gender quotas' system.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE TIMID REALITY OF GENDER EQUALITY

Political concepts such as democracy, representation, participation, and political recruitment, selection of candidates, citizenship and nationalism are often considered neutral. In practice, however, these concepts are extremely gender biased. Political rights for women are basic human rights, and human rights are an integral part of democracy. This section explores the historical background of the issue under discussion as well as its timid reality.

2.1 Historical Background: from dark days to political hope and recognition

It has been observed[iv] that one of the consequences of the World War II was the awakening of the national consciousness of the people living under the colonial rule. In all African countries signs of emancipation appeared together with a desire for more participation in political life. This trend led to the creation of political parties and affected all social strata, the more so as politicians tried to reach both male and female audiences in order to rally great numbers in the fight against colonialism. Women played a major role, in the armed services and in the rebellion, during the struggle for independence (Mbembe, 1996[32]). Meredith Terretta (2007, 86[33]) argues that women's political mobilization, rooted in practices of cultural and social subversion or resistance, guided Cameroonian nationalism into a socially and politically transformative role, transcending the urban-rural divide. Some scholars argued that colonial policies affected women in contradictory ways in Cameroon. Certain policies and ideologies constricted the space available to women for public action, while others opened new possibilities for women in the areas of education, salaried employment, public life, travel abroad, and activism in local and international women's organizations. Adams (2006[34]) found that Cameroonian women instrumentally rejected and incorporated elements of colonial practice and selectively incorporated certain gender discourses into their post-colonial activities.

In fact, the women of Cameroon, taking advantage of the situation and being convinced of the people's right to fight against external domination, supported the different political parties. However, patriarchal values broadly emerged, as for quite a long time after their status in those movements was merely a backward one because men felt that their role in politics was inconsistent with their role as wives and mothers. This perception propagated "an ideology of female domesticity that laid stress on women's reproductive and nurturing roles above their autonomy and productivity (Walker, 1990: 13[35]). The major focus of the literature on this issue is on how the colonial state contributed to the "*housewifisation*" of African women in general (Mama, 1996: 29[36]). Gretchen Bauer (2004[37]) argues that the hand that stirs the pot can also run the country.

The history of representation in the Cameroonian National Assembly is one of a long process of women's struggles in the public sphere (Atanga, 2009[38]). Both men and women were granted the right to vote and stand for elections in 1946. For a decade women's lack of the confidence to stand for election and their perception of politics as a "dirty" game kept them out of political life. In 1955, a woman, Mrs Julienne Nyat, who dared to stand for elections became the target of bitter criticism. She had to endure men's mockery and her failure to win was later used as argument against women's political participation. This courageous action by one of their sisters was yet sufficient to sow the seed in all the others. Having been granted voting rights at the same time as men, it was hard for women to understand why they were cut off from the political process. It also prompted the emergence of an increased women's nationalist activism.

In 1960 therefore, just the year Cameroon became independent (1st January), a more successful attempt was made and a woman, Mrs. Julienne Keutcha, was elected to the National Assembly during the April 10 elections. This happy result opened the gates of Parliament to women and this success was widely celebrated by all the women of Cameroon and became a landmark marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. It was a turning point in history because of the role the National Assembly can play in improving opportunities for Cameroonian women to

participate in all aspects of development. Local councils in their turn welcomed more Cameroonian women citizens[v]. Mrs Mua Ngong was the first woman to be appointed member of government in 1961.

The 1965 elections brought three women to the different Assemblies: Mrs. Keutcha to the National Federal Assembly, Mrs. Tsanga to the East Cameroon Assembly and Mrs. Burnly to the West Cameroon Assembly. In addition, the number of women in town councils was increasingly on the rise. The Political Bureau of the Cameroon National Union (CNU), the highest party organ and authority, had Mrs. Keutcha on its board. As their action became more and more visible, it helped women to win more seats in the Assemblies: with Mrs. Chilla in the National Federal Assembly, and Mrs. Motaze, Nwanack, Fotso and Ebanda in the East Cameroon Assembly, made the total number of women in Parliament eight in 1970. Mrs. Tsanga was later appointed Minister in charge of Social Affairs.   Given the increasing number of women in the public sphere or among the emergent "native elite" (Onana, 2004[39]), Julienne Keutcha, first female Cameroonian Member of Parliament, declared that: "Far from coming up with a list of complaints or claims, women have always looked forward to the society in which they live for changes as regards their dignity and for improvement in their means of livelihood. Whether they be Country Women, housewives or working-women, their legitimate ambition has been that they be regarded as equal to men without depriving the latter of their role as family heads"[vi]. In other words, once women embark in politics, it does not mean they have automatically became the same as men or the head of their family for married women.

With the Reunification (1972), came a greater role for women in society. In the first post Reunification elections in 1973, seven[vii] women were elected to Parliament. The presence of a woman from the North (Mrs. Fadimatou Abdoulaye), a presumed Moslem dominated and conservative area was considered as a true revolution. The fact that women are represented is stimulating for the female electorate and militancy (Nkwi, 1985). Parties can seek the female vote by selecting or appointing women. The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, as the Cameroon National Union (1966-1985) from which it merged; the majority party understood that women were of paramount importance. That is why it maintained a women's organization or wing within the party that bring independent women's groups under its umbrella. Women, as ''born animators'', with their natural flexibility, are aware of the fact that participation in their country's political and economic development is important. Although some efforts had been made during the recent years to promote the advancement of women in the labor force, their involvement in political life is still a matter of concern as evidence in the tables below.

Table 1: Some basics facts on gender profile in Cameroon

Rubric	Indicators	%		Sources	Year
Structure by gender	Total population (19 419 100)	Male	Female	Third Population and Housing Census of November 2005	2010
		49.4	50.6		
	Head of family	74	26	National Institute of Statistics (EESI 2)	2011
	The electorate	42	58	Elections Cameroon	2011
Literacy	Literacy rate	78.2	64.7	National Institute of Statistics (EESI 2)	2011
Schooling	6 years or more (80.9 %)	85.7	76.1	National Institute of Statistics (EESI 2)	2011
Primary education	Literacy rate (6-11 years)	79.4	78.0	National Institute of Statistics (EESI 2)	2011
	Completion rate	78.8	66.4	School map	2008/ 2009
	Pupils who were supposed to be in secondary school	40.0	31.0	Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey (MICS)	2006
	Transversal rate of retention	65.2	63.2	School map	2008/ 2009
Secondary education	Transition rate from primary to secondary (85.3%)	88.8	81.3	National Institute of Statistics (EESI 2)	2011
	Schooling (49.3%)	51.0	47.7	National Institute of Statistics (EESI 2)	2011
	Completion rate of the first cycle	76.2	77.4		
	Transition rate from first cycle to second cycle	62.0	54.0		
	Retention rate in second cycle	16.0	54.6	Strategic document on education	
					2005
Higher education	Student population	55.7	44.3		
	State's Universities (8) (200 000 students)	56.8	43.2	Ministry of Higher Education	2011
	Private Institutes of Higher education (99 Institutes)	48.6	51.4		
	Teaching staff (5000 in State's universities)	94.1	5.9		

Table 2: Proportion of women (%) in the public administration, penitentiary   administration and central services of ministries between 2006 and 2009

Status	Category	2006	2007	2008	2009
Civil Servant	A2	28.3	28.4	28.7	29.0
	A1	27.1	27.9	29.1	30.4
	B2	25.4	26.4	27.6	27.6
	B1	33.3	33.9	34.9	36.1
	C	34.6	35.2	35.2	35.4
	D	28.6	29.2	30.2	28.6
Contractual	CAT7	51.2	51.7	53.5	52.3
	CAT8	45.4	53.3	55.5	56.0
	CAT9	41.2	40.4	41.1	44.7
	CAT10	31.2	30.8	31.5	33.2
	CAT11	31.2	25.5	25.5	26.3
	CAT12	25.0	42.9	28.6	28.6
Recruited by a decision	CAT1	5.4	5.0	5.1	18.2
	CAT2	15.6	15.2	14.4	13.9
	CAT3	30.6	30.0	30.6	28.1
	CAT4	52.3	51.5	50.0	48.2
	CAT5	54.2	52.5	52.6	51.3
	CAT6	50.4	49.7	49.8	47.7
Magistrate		22.1	22.0	22.3	22.7
Diplomat		8.6	9.1	7.0	8.9
Students in major training schools or Institutes		25.4	26.0	32.6	35.2
On the whole		27.2	28.8	30.5	31.4

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2012.

Table 2 indicates an increase of the proportion of women   in the public administration, penitentiary administration and central services of ministries between 2006 and 2009. Women formed the majority in category 4 to 8 which are low paid jobs. But the tendency reverses in high categories in favor of men. Certain professions remained the field of masculine domination. Thus, only 22% of magistrates are women. The proportion of female diplomats is too low[viii] with only one woman ambassador. However, the number of women enrolled in major training schools as the National School of Magistracy and Administration or Institute of International Relations increased significantly since 2006. Furthermore, statistics[ix] provided by the Ministry of public service and administrative reform indicates that:

- 16.67% of the secretaries generals of ministries and assimilates are female and 83.33% are male,
- 15.85% of the directors and assimilates in central administrations are female and 84.15% are male,
- 21.17% of the sub-directors and assimilates are female and 78.83% are male,
- 27.81% of chiefs of service are female and 72.19% are male,
- 34.86% of chiefs of bureau are female and 65.14% are male,
- On eight 8 universities, there is only 1 woman Rector and 7 men,
- On 24 vice-rectors, 3 are women and 21 are men,
- On 11 government delegates, there is 0 woman and 11 men,
- On 71 posts of directors of State's enterprises, 4 are occupied by women and 67 by men, giving the rate of 5.6% female and 94.4% male.

In the 1990s, increasing attention was paid to the ways in which women were incorporated into patronage networks through women's wings, grassroots women's organizations, and other organizations led by the First Lady (Ibrahim, 2009[40]). Although there is an increase of the number of women in the labor force, they remain under represented in most decision-making institutions in Cameroon.

2.2. The timid reality of gender equality regarding discourse framing

The key aim of this paragraph is to raise awareness on the under-representation of women through more empirical evidence, regarding the ways in which demands for gender equality are framed both at the international and national levels. Studies carried out in many countries recently found that an essential tenet of any democratic framework is the principle of human rights, including the granting and exercise of the political rights of both men and women. The development of any political agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected is not credible. Despite efforts over the centuries by prominent women—and men—the recognition and exercise of women's political, economic and social rights is by no means equal between women and men (Ballington in International IDEA, 2005: 24[41]). Women constitute 51% of the Cameroon's population. Decision making and priority setting continue to be largely in the hands of men. Taking into account gendered perspectives and involving both women

and men in decision-making processes are a sine qua none of any democratic framework. Hence democracy, by definition, cannot afford to be gender-blind. It must strive towards equality and representation of women and men in decision-making processes and in the opportunities to achieve both these goals (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; International IDEA, 2005). The equal participation of women and men in public life is one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1979, and in force since 1981, ratified by Cameroon in 1988. This ratification was followed by the lifting of the marital authorization to travel abroad for married women in 1990 and the allocation of lodging allowances or housing benefits to all wage-earning women in 1991. Today, more than 20 years since the signing of the convention, 179 countries out of 194 are party to it and bound to take measures to promote women's participation in decision making and leadership positions.

Cameroon always takes part in major International Conferences where issues of development and gender are discussed. Resolutions and recommendations issued during these gatherings are considered by the government while framing public policies and others development' programs. The first national orientation document related to woman's promotion and gender was elaborated and adopted in 1997 by the Cameroon's government through the ministry of social affairs and feminine condition This document, called '*Plan d'Action National d'Intégration de la Femme au Développement*' (National Action Plan of the Integration of Woman in Development), defined government's priorities and strategies on this subject. These include: - the amelioration of the living conditions of woman – the improvement of the legal status of woman – the valorization of female resources in all sectors of development – the effective participation of woman to the process of decision-making – protection and promotion of girl child[x] – the fight of violence against women – the improvement of the legal framework of an effective integration of woman to development. In 2002, this plan was updated and consecrate gender mainstreaming as an approach in development. The Document of the Strategy of Poverty Reduction (DSRP) as well as the Document of the Strategy for Growth and Employment (DSCE), adopted respectively in 2003 and 2009, endorse these strategies and put emphasis on gender in term of the promotion of the equality and equity between sexes.

Broadly speaking, "**State feminism"**, a term that has emerged to describe "women's policy agencies", "national machineries for the advancement of women" or "gender equality machinery" within state bureaucracies that deal with women's policy issues or gender equality (Lovenduski, 2008[42]; Vogel, 2011: 237; Kantola & Squires, 2012: 383-384[43]) take many forms in Cameroon. A key characteristic of state feminism has thus been the usage of state-based policy-making mechanisms and targeting the state in promoting gender equality. "State feminism" thereby signifies overcoming the traditional suspicious attitudes that many feminists have felt towards the patriarchal state (Kantola in Kantola & Squires ibid). The main national mechanism of gender promotion in Cameroon is the ministry in charge of questions related to the promotion of woman and gender.

However, it is important to note that states may support feminist policies and programs for reasons other than their explicitly stated goals. States may adopt legislation for strategic reasons that do not necessarily have the interests of women in mind (Adams, 2007:180[44]). Studying the case of Egypt, Hatem (in Adams, ibid) notes that "the state's move to introduce changes in gender relations within the family and in the political arena had less to do with either its commitment to the rights of women or its desire for political liberalization. It was a question of how it defined its political interests at the time". States' ulterior motives can undermine their commitment to gender equality (Adams, ibid). Addressing state feminism in non-democratic states, Aili Mari Tripp (in Adams, ibid) argues that "State feminism under a semi-authoritarian or authoritarian state is much more constrained and subject to political manipulations than state feminism within a democracy. There is an ambiguity within many of the female friendly policies under a semi-authoritarian regime because they have the potential to enhance women's status and in many respects they actually accomplish those goals. But in other important ways, they can also be subverted and turned against women". According to Melinda Adams (2007), in non-democratic states, scholars and activists need to approach state initiatives with a healthy dose of skepticism. 'Women-friendly' policies may promote the advancement of women. They may also, however, maintain the status quo or even advance a state agenda that works against women's interests. Some women are used to empower men (Konde, 1990).

The global and national political will manifested for the advancement of women, as indicated above, is becoming a concrete reality that needs to be improved in Cameroon, as the following tables indicate:

Table 3: Gender configuration of the National assembly since 1973

Legislature	1973-1978	1978-1983	1983-1988	1988-1992	1992-1997	1997-2002	2002-2007	2007-2013	2013-
Male	113	108	103	154	157	170	161	155	124
Female	7	12	17	26	23	10	19	25	56
Total	120	120	120	180	180	180	180	180	180

<u>Source</u>: Cameroon Tribune N° 10014 / 6215, January 18, 2012, National Institute of Statistics, 2012 and elections results. Among the 100 senators elected or appointed in 2013, 20 are women.

The participation of women in parliamentary life in Cameroon presents an evolution that takes a form of V from 1992 to 2012. Furthermore, women representation is significant under one party system as well as under dominant party system. In highly polarized context and competitive constituencies, parties prefer to present male candidates. Party competition and ultimately the number of parties are relevant (Slaroff, 2000[45]). Our argument here is that the nature of the political market is, to a certain extent, a powerful intervening variable in voters demand for male or female representatives.

Table 4: Proportion of women in government and territorial command posts between 2006 and 2012

Year	2006	2007	2012
Office	Number of women	Number of women	Number of women
Minister and secretary of State	6/60	6/60	9/60
Governor	0/10	0/10	0/10
Senior Divisional Officer	0/58	0/58	1/58
Secretary general of region	0/10	0/10	1/10
Divisional Officer	2/267	2/267	5/360

Source: Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and our investigation.

The representativeness of women in government has witnessed an increase from 1, in 1982, to 9 in 2012. The appointment of the first woman, Mme Zongo née Nyambone Antoinette, as Senior Divisional Officer of the Koung-Khi Division (in the West Region) by presidential decree n° 2012/480 of October 22, 2012 is an historic step in the journey towards gender equality in territorial command. The promotion of another woman, Mme Akono née Nga Zang Rachel, as first female Permanent Secretary at the Governor's Office in the East Region, is another breakthrough. It enhances the women's personality and makes it possible for women's view to be felt in the development strategy of the country[xi].

Table 5: Gender configuration of the Bureau of the National Assembly (November 2013)

Male	16
Female	7 (CPDM: 6; UDC: 1)
Total	**23**

Source: Compiled by us.

Table 6: Gender distribution of mayors and deputies mayors since 2002

Office	2002-2007				2007- 2013			
	Number	Male	Female	% Female	Number	Male	Female	% Female
Mayor	339	329	10	2.9	360	334	26	7.73
1st deputy	339	302	37	10.9	360	303	57	15.8
2nd deputy	339	251	88	26	360	276	84	23.3
3rd deputy	67	51	16	24	98	82	16	16.3
4th deputy	01	00	01	100	97	85	12	12.4

Source: Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINADT).

Table 7: Evolution of gender distribution of municipal councilors and female mayors (1982-2007)

Year of election	Total municipal councilors	Male	Female	% female	Number of female mayors
1982	5 107	4 771	336	6.6	00
1987	5 345	4 899	446	8.3	01
1996	9 932	8 871	1 061	10.7	02
2002	9 963	8 661	1 302	13.1	10
2007	10 626	8 979	1 647	15.5	26

Source: MINASCOF

Table 8: Gender configuration of members of the Higher Council of the Magistracy

Male	Female	Total
11	3	14

Source: Compiled by us.

Table 9: Gender configuration of the entire Judiciary

Category X	Total	Male		Female	
Magistrates	994	752	75,65%	242	24,35%
Presidents of the Court of First Instance	75	64	85,33%	11	14,67%
General Prosecutors	10	9	90%	1	10%
Public Prosecutors	70	68	97,14%	2	2,86%
Presidents of Appeal Courts	10	9	90%	1	10%
Assistant Public Prosecutors at the Supreme Court	10	10	100%	0	0%
Advisers at the Supreme Court	51	45	88,24	6	11,76%
Directors of Central administration at the Ministry of Justice	7	7	100%	0	0%

Source: Ministry of Justice, Politique nationale genre (a document published by the Ministry of women's empowerment and family in 2010).

Table 10: Rate of women in certain liberal professions between 2000 and 2008

Year	2000			2001			2008		
Profession	M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F
Lawyer	720	144	16.7	913	195	17.6	1067	274	20.4
Bailiff	170	34	16.7	…	…	…	405	81	16.6
Solicitor	25	18	41.9	…	…	…	84	46	35.3
Medical doctor	…	…	…	2169	243	11.2	…	…	…

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2012.

Women are poorly represented in certain liberal professions as lawyer, bailiff and medical doctor. However, the proportion of female lawyer has increased significantly. Gender inequality is less visible in the profession of solicitor.

As we survey all these tables, except table 3 that indicates a significant representation of women in 2013, and statistical data, we find that women recruitment and selection in major sites of power or decision-making is poor, and far from the 30% prescribed by the Beijing 1995 Conference. Finally, the paper notes that the low representation of women in key public institutions is linked to certain constraints or obstacles that should be addressed.

3. OBSTACLES TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE NECESSITY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MECHANISMS

Gender and politics scholarship teaches us that gender is a socio-cultural constructed concept in which men and women were supposed to have their "specific" roles to play in the societies. This section aims to highlight the gender dynamics and especially factors that are behind the relative effectiveness of the strategies adopted by various conferences and institutions. In other words, significant change in institutional culture and social arrangements remain to be brought in. It is an urgent need of the times to push the issue and to ensure that it does not remain merely a façade. In Cameroon, as throughout the world, the debate on the quota system is at the order of the day.

3.1. An overview of factors hampering or facilitating gender equality

Low political involvement of women in politics is usually attributed to socio-political, situational and structural factors (Welch, Kingsbury in Siemienska, 1985: 282[46]). Regarding socio-political determinants, they are usually seen to include primary a country's ideology, as a rule assigning different expectations to men and women. Situational factors include women's placement in society, tied to performance of traditional roles in micro groups (the family and household). This leaves them little opportunity to become actively involved in other groups or to devote the time and energy required to fight for positions giving them a share in management, production and distribution of goods, or in political life (Siemienska, ibid). Concerning structural factors, it is pointed out that even when women achieve higher education, that education still prepares them for the so-called feminine occupation and not the ones from which the society's decision makers are recruited (Siemienska, ibid).

According to the officials from the ministry of women's empowerment and the family, the poor quantitative representation of women in the management of public and political affairs, as well as in the family and community spheres in Cameroon can be associated to factors such as:

- The patriarchal organization of the society,
- The persistence of sexist biases and socio-cultural burden,
- The poor autonomy of the woman,
- The absence of affirmative action mechanisms in the selection of candidates running for elections or to be appointed.

We categorize the factors into three areas: Political Party, socioeconomic, and socio cultural. They can be used in explaining low or increasing rates of female representation and involvement in political life. The electoral system factor will be addressed in the next paragraph.

The political party is one of a set of three factors established by Norris and Lovenduski (1995[47]) for explaining the recruitment of women, though it has often been seen as playing a constraining function or a gate-keeping role, rather than overtly facilitating women's participation.

The norm in most countries is for political parties to play an important role in the legislative recruitment process by identifying possible candidates, selecting them as their official candidates, and putting them forward to the public for election. For women to get elected to parliament they need to pass three crucial barriers: first, they need to select themselves; second, they need to be selected as candidates by the parties; and, third, they need to be selected by the voters (Matland & Montgomery, 2003[48]). Given the role of parties as gatekeepers for candidate selection, the emphasis on the selection process of candidates within parties has become a new area of interest for scholars (Norris, 1993; Caul, 2001[49]). Some of them conclude that women's inclusion into party elite' results in larger numbers of women running for office only in proportional representation systems, but it does not result in larger numbers of women legislators (Paxton, 1997[50]). In Cameroon, awareness of gender equality in political recruitment is still low. Male political leaders have a disproportionate influence over party politics and women do not receive much support. The problems related to candidate selection and "unfair competition" (Sindjoun, 1997[51]) are among the causes of women's weak representation on the party lists and in the main political institutions. Aili Mari Tripp and her colleagues (2009: 147[52]) observed that sometimes male-dominated selection committees are not prone to selecting female candidates or placing them high on the party list. Political parties intent on winning elections in a new multiparty system often indicate that they don't want to "waste" their chances on a woman who is perceived of as unlikely to win.

Nevertheless, the Cameroon People Democratic Movement is known for its support for balance, including gender balance, and his national president is always willing to intervene to this end. He has a stated commitment to gender equality and has always placed the goal of advancing the status of women at the centre of his political, economic and social policies. He knows that women as voters constitute a significant force which can have an impact on the elections results. To come out with this conclusion, we have calculated the rate of women's MPs or candidates in various political parties. We also selected some extracts of President Paul Biya speeches, as evidence of political will in relation to female representation and participation.

"The condition of women is one of our constant concerns. Our action for women will consist in strengthening their integration into the political and economic life of the country" (October 1992 campaign speech)
"No Cameroonian would be excluded in the Nation building process. The status of women is one of our constant preoccupations. Our action in this regard will consist in further involving women in the political and economic life of the country", (sworn in speech, November 3, 1992).
"Cameroonian women, I pledge to foster women's advancement and shall not fail to do so . . . I shall do my best to ensure that your efforts are recognized and valued everywhere. I shall ensure that you are duly represented in all decision-making spheres of the country" (October 1997 campaign speech)
"I am counting on all Cameroonians. I am counting on the women and the youth especially. The former because they ensure the continuity of our Nation and are, for this reason, more committed to peace and to the welfare of their children…", address made at his swearing-in ceremony on November 3, 1997.
"You know the importance that I attach to the advancement of women. Notable progress has been achieved in the last years. But it is not sufficient. We need more female ministers, legislators, businesswomen, administrators, doctors, engineers, etc. Our sisters can count on me to advance their interests in the areas of equality and rights" (October 2004 campaign speech)
"I want to address Cameroonian women specifically, to let them know that our vision of development has always considered women's empowerment as a priority factor in our collective success. Our vision for 2035 goes even further. We intend to reduce obstacles inherent in some customs and traditions. We intend to strengthen measures aimed at empowering women intellectually and economically and in terms of family values. At my instigation, the participation of women in decision making has improved significantly. We will empower women further, at the political, administrative and professional level" (Opening and general policy speech on the occasion of the 3rd ordinary congress of the party on September 15, 2011).
"On the social front, our new seven-year term will focus on (…) empowering women in order to attain equal rights for men and women (…)", Campaign speech in Maroua, October 4, 2011.
"(…) Together, we are going to strengthen true gender equality (…)", thanks message October 25, 2011.

Table11: Gender configuration of the Central Committee of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) since 2011

Tenure members	Elected		Designated	
	Male	175	Male	108
	Female	29	Female	18
	Total	204	Total	126
Substitute members	Elected		Designated	
	Male	90	Male	33
	Female	19	Female	02
	Total	109	Total	35
Total	**Male**	**Female**		**474**
	406	**68**		

Source: Constructed by us with data collected in *L'Action*, Special number, September 2011.

Table 12: Gender configuration of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) since its creation in 1985.

Period	1985-1990	1990-1992	1992-2007	2007-2008	2008-
Male	34	8	24	16	33
Female	03	0	01	03	06
Total	37	8	25	19	39

Source: Compiled by us. On the 43 members of the National Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), elected or designated during the 2012 party's convention, 09 are female and 34 are male.

Table 13: Gender configuration of the Political Bureau of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM).

Period	1996-2011	2011-
Male	17	19
Female	4	4
Total	21	23

Source: Compiled by us.

Table 14: Gender configuration of the organizing comity of the 3rd ordinary congress of the Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPDM), September 15-16, 2011

Male	54
Female	12
Total	**66**

Source: Compiled by us from Decision N° 03/RDPC/PN of August 26, 2011.

Table 15: Rate of women candidates by region during the 2007 municipal elections

Region X	Number of posts	Number of candidates	Men	Women	% women
Adamaoua	597	1584	1422	162	10.22
Centre	1946	3232	2628	604	18.68
East	882	1539	1363	176	11.43
Far North	1593	4184	3942	242	05.78
Littoral	1026	3027	2436	591	19.52
North	699	1988	1743	245	12.32
North West	1088	2762	2218	544	19.69
West	1191	3528	2981	547	15.50
South	744	1116	900	216	19.44
South West	897	2020	1678	342	16.93
Total	10626	24 980	21 311	3669	14.68

Source: Constructed by us from Arrêté n° 000002 du 31 mai 2007 (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization). Candidates presented by 22 political parties.

Among the 1302 candidates in competition for the 2007 legislative elections, there were a total number of 118 female candidates: 50 substantives candidates and 68 alternates. The Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPDM) presented 27 female substantives candidates and 34 alternates. The Social Democratic Front (SDF) presented 7 female substantives candidates and 17 alternates; the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) presented 8 female substantives candidates and 9 alternates; the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) and the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU/UDC) presented each, 4 female substantives candidates and 4 alternates. In addition one can notes that 75.6% of the 41 political parties that stand for these elections present at least one female candidate. 55.6% of the parties present at least one women head of the list and 60% at least one alternate. 25 women out of the 50 female

substantives candidates and 38 out of the 68 alternates were elected during these elections. Our argument here is that women who make it onto the ballot in legislative elections are likely to get elected than male candidates. Therefore, parties should adopt quotas for the composition of their leadership[xii] structures and candidates lists. Parties with proportionate number of women may attract female votes although women sometimes do run their fellow women down for petty jealousy issues.

Scholars working on socioeconomic factors argue that there is inconclusive evidence on the relationship between women's socio-economic status and women's political representation. Socio-economic factors, like labor force participation (Matland 1998[53]) and socioeconomic status of women (Krook, 2004[54]; Reynolds, 1999[55]) are identified as influencing women's political participation. Female labor force participation has been shown to lead to greater female political participation generally (Togeby, 1994[56]) and increased women in parliament specifically (Rule, 1987[57]). Thus, increasing numbers of women in the labor force will certainly favor the access of women to political office. However, Paxton (1997), suggests that education, numbers of women in the workforce, and other factors that influence the supply of potential women candidates are not as important as institutional factors that block women's access to political power. In the framework of the recruitment of 25 000 young Cameroonians in the civil service, for the budgetary year 2011, 305 094 files of candidates were recorded. Survey of the files indicated 52.65% male candidates and 47.35% female candidates. Nobody cannot longer say that "Where are the women?" when it comes to recruitment or any other selection. Confronted to the current feminization of poverty, women have entered into networks that help with farming activities, the selling of crops and the formation of new relationships in their communities. This has helped in crafting new farming methods and pursuing other livelihood options based on the different experiences of the women. As wage-workers, the networks have given these women the power to provide foods and to negotiate income earnings and assume more power in coordinating land-based livelihood activities. However, statistics above shown that women's share of the labor force and education are not strongly correlated with the representation of women in national assembly, council executive and other political executives in Cameroon.

The heavily patriarchal socio-cultural environment is often unfriendly or even, to a certain extent, hostile to women in Cameroon as elsewhere around the globe (Mead, 1935[58]; Ritzenthaler, 1960[59]; Konde, 1991[60]; Matynia, 1994[61]; Itzin 1995[62]; Thomas, 2000[63]; Inglehart & Norris, 2002[64], 2003[65]; Kratochwill, 2012[66]; Mouelle, 2013[67]). In Cameroon as in many countries, some traditions continue to subjugate women and to emphasize their primary roles as mothers and housewives and to restrict them to those roles (the most difficult job according to US President Barack Obama). Nadezhda Shvedova (in International IDEA, 2005: 44) notes that "a traditional strong, patriarchal value system favors sexually segregated roles, and 'traditional cultural values' militate against the advancement, progress and participation of women in any political process". Societies all over the world are dominated by an ideology of 'a woman's place'. According to this ideology, women should only play the role of 'working mother', which is generally low-paid and apolitical. In addition, in some areas, men even tell women how to vote limiting henceforth any possibility of rational choice. As a matter of fact, men have not always been very objective in their judgment in relation with the very complex and demanding role that women sometimes play in their capacity as mothers, housewives, farmers and sometimes as wage-earners. Sushma Swaraj, an MP from India once said that: "It is very difficult for a woman to make up her mind to enter politics. Once she makes up her own mind, then she has to prepare her husband, and her children, and her family. Once she has overcome all these obstacles and applies for the ticket, then the male aspirants against whom she is applying makeup all sorts of stories about her. And after all this, when her name goes to the party bosses, they do not select her name because they fear losing that seat" (in International IDEA, 2005: 38). In other words, there is a link between voters' attitudes towards women as politicians and the number of women elected to parliament (Paxton, 1997 and Reynolds, 1999). Lovenduski (2005: 48) argues that when women participate in political settings, "the most difficult obstacle is the deeply embedded culture of masculinity" which makes for institutional sexism. As most women fear being ridiculed in public, they sometimes tend to shy away from politics.

As regards relations between women and tradition in Cameroon, obstacles still stand in the way of women's total and complete emancipation unless tradition, which varies from one region to another, is modified and cleared of any features that may be detrimental to the full advancement of women. Sometimes women are not allowed to do certain things because of customs they often blindly believe in. Land tenure system, succession related problems, female genital mutilation and widowhood are some of the many cultural practices that have contributed much in keeping women in the back stage of society out of leadership positions.

Aili Mari Tripp and her colleagues (2009: 147) argue that cultural beliefs keep women subservient to men in the household, which has implications for political leadership in the public sphere. Women themselves also may be reticent to run for office for a variety of reasons. Partly the reluctance may stem from cultural prohibitions on women speaking in public in front of men and campaigning in public places. Campaigning often involves travel, spending nights away from home, and meeting potential voters in public places, all of which puts women politicians at risk of being thought of as "loose women" or "unfit mothers." Not only may women find themselves and their families under attack or the subject of malicious gossip, but husbands will sometimes forbid their wives from engaging in politics. Some husbands are threatened by the possibility that their wives will interact with other men. Others fear the social stigma directed against their wives, or they worry that their wife's political preoccupations will divert her attention away from the home. According to the Social Democratic Front (SDF) secretary general, Elisabeth V. Tamanjong[xiii], men prefer having

meetings in the night so that husbands do not allow their wives to attend for reasons that they have to take care of the kids.

Mary G. Dietz (1992[68]) concludes that we are conditioned by the contexts in which we live, but we are also the creators of our political, social and cultural constructions and we can change them if we are so determined. Henceforth, if the political discourse of today is telling women that there are no obstacles to their emancipation, it should be accompanied by concrete acts and not rhetoric because the level of female representation in governance is still low in Cameroon. After focusing on the syndromes of the determinants of women's situation, we will highlight a configuration that is conducive to the emergence of a given type of gender sensitive culture or the framing of particular types of action designed to change the situation.

3.2. The necessity of affirmative action mechanisms

We consider affirmative action as temporary and transitory measures that provide preferential treatment to women without undermining republican meritocracy. In fact, affirmative action generally refers to a set of public policies meant to redress the effects of past or present discrimination, marginalization or exclusion. It connotes active measures to level the playing field for access to education, to jobs, and to government contracts. While a wide variety of affirmative action policies have been implemented in different countries, much of the existing research concerns experience with the affirmative action directed at expanding legislative recruitment process and selection of political executives for women leading to numerical balancing (Bergmann, 1999[69]).

The affirmative action as quota for women seek to remedy harm caused to this social category by "cognitive bias", that is, harm caused by an actor who is aware of the person sex as legally-protected status and who is motivated consciously or unconsciously by that awareness. Joyce Jacobsen (2011[70]) argues that affirmative action is an activist approach to trying to increase the representation of historically underrepresented groups, whether in the workforce, in particular occupations, in higher paid, more prestigious positions, in the political system, or in higher education. As such, it is a more controversial policy than antidiscrimination policy, but it also holds the promise of enacting more radical change in society toward the ultimate goal of equalizing both opportunity and outcome for members of different groups.

While studying how to increase women's political representation, Drude Dahlerup (in International IDEA, 2005:141) observes that given the slow speed at which the number of women in politics is growing, different policy measures are being introduced to reach gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism to increase, and safeguard, women's presence in parliaments and are now being introduced all over the world. Therefore, quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government. Quotas aim at increasing women's representation in publicly elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils. According to Drude Dahlerup (2010[71]) gender quotas draw legitimacy from the discourse of exclusion, according to which the main reasons for women's under-representation are the exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large. Quotas place the burden of candidate recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process, first and foremost the political parties. Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and give women a chance which they do not have today in most parts of the world. Aili Mari Tripp & Alice Kang (2008: 340[72]) agree that quotas are adopted to redress the imbalance between men and women in the political arena. Although women have the right to run for office in all countries in the world, women's access to political representation is one of the areas where we find the biggest gaps between women and men. In other words the adoption of quotas in many countries reflects a growing consensus that women should have greater representation or even equal representation with men (Tripp, 2001[73], 2004[74]; Hugues[75]; Norris & Lovenduski, 1989[76], Sow, 2009[77]; Steel & Kabashima, 2008[78]; Trelfall, 2005[79]; Whittington, 2004[80]; Young, 1996[81], 2001[82]. United Nations, 1995[83]; UNDP, 1995[84]).

In terms of legislative bodies the most common type of quota is the **voluntary party quota**, which is adopted by parties of their own will regardless of whether or not there is a compulsory party quota. Another type of quota is the **compulsory party quota** mandated by the constitution or by the legislation, requiring political parties to institute quotas for women. **Reserved seats or women's lists** involve constitutional or legal provisions that are intended to determine from the outset the number of seats that will be competed for and held by women (Tripp & Kang, ibid; Bauer, 2008[85] & 2012b[86]). Other institutional factors include the use of open or closed party lists, placement mandates for women (Htun & Jones, 2002[87]; Htun & Weldon, 2012[88]); and term limits, thus opening up seats for newcomers like women (Krook, 2004[89]).

Drawing inspiration from research on women and parliaments, Shireen Hassim (2002[90], 2009a[91], 2009b[92]) argues that quotas can have profoundly negative effects on deepening democracy when adopted in contexts where the key institutions of democracy and human rights are weakly developed or absent, and where elected political actors are weakly accountable to electoral constituencies. However, she acknowledges the fact that quotas demands are based on the assumption that increasing the representation of women is a democratic good in itself. In fact, women's consistent under-representation in legislatures and other political executives undoubtedly constitutes a democratic deficit

and undermines the significant level of women's participation in pro-democracy movements in contexts of extreme authoritarianism.

In Cameroon, provisions specific to the nomination of candidates to the election of Members of Parliament (Section 164 (4) of Law N° 2012/001 of 19 April 2012 relating to the Electoral Code), and Municipal Councilors (Section 181 (2)), of the same law, state that: "The nomination paper shall contain the following particulars: (…); e) Evidence of representation of sociological components of the constituency in drawing up the list; d) Evidence of consideration of gender in drawing up the list". In the same perspective, provisions relating to the nomination of candidates to the election of Senators (Section 218(3) of the above law indicate that: "The composition of each list must reflect: -The various sociological components of the Region; - Gender aspects". There is a need to vote internal laws and rules to govern "gender aspects".

As we survey certain evolutions, we find two common denominators: - in all of the cases, governments were forced to take steps that they never would have considered on their own; - and the force driving this change came from both external and national dynamics. This study suggests that constitutional or legal quotas and term limits in Cameroon will certainly opening up seats for newcomers in politics like women.

4. CONCLUSION

We observed that the importance of early socialization as far as images of male and female social roles are concerned is becoming less relevant in Cameroon. This may be associated to change in mentalities, advocacy, sensitization campaigns organized by women's movements and a gender sensitive legal framework. The time when men were usually put in the role of decision makers and given a privileged position in society, while women are assigned inferior roles, involving a degree of subordination to, and dependence on, men, is running out. Although women underrepresentation does no longer translate the labor force or the gender profile of Cameroonian Universities, which are in charge of the training of the ruling elite, we still give credit to the assumption made by Matland (1998a). The idea is that when women approach men in levels of literacy, workforce participation, and university education—and thus become men's equals in the social spheres—they are more likely to be seen as men's equals in the political sphere, and therefore their representation will increase. In other words, little girls could enter the public world of knowledge and begin to imagine themselves beyond the narrow patriarchal identities of motherhood and wifehood, roles that intimately tie their intellectual and social abilities to the social reproduction of families and communities (McFadden, 2005: 5[93]). A general crusade should henceforth be launch against sexual harassment in school, college and university. Parents should give the same opportunities of education to both boys and girls. Traditional authorities have to cooperate with respect to women's leadership, especially in deconstructing certain cultural constraints to women rights such as genital mutilations and widowhood rites as well as access to land. Political parties are the crucial vehicle for delivering the empowerment of women in representative democracy, and it is their internal structures that are the route to implementation of any gender equality policy. State policies and processes regarding women's rights should be intensified. Our thesis is that a shift from the current voluntary quota system to a compulsory one will reduce obstacles inherent in some customs, traditions and party politics that impede women representation or gender equality in legislative recruitment process and selection of other political executives.

Notes

[i] The distinction between gender and sex which lead to gender studies emerged in the early 1940s.

[ii] Sylviane Agacinski criticizes the "queer theory" which considers the distinction between man and woman as a pure social construction (Butler, J., Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity, New York: Routledge, 1990).

[iii] ABC of Women Workers Rights and Gender Equality, ILO, Geneva, 2000, p.48.

[iv] See Visages de la femme camerounaise, a publication of the Women wing of the Cameroon National Union (WCNU) following the legislatives elections of June 7, 1970.

[v] See *La femme camerounaise,* une publication de l'Organisation des Femmes de l'Union Nationale Camerounaise, Paris, Edicef, 1972.

[vi] Ibid

[vii] The seven elected women Members of Parliament are: Mrs. Rosalie Motaze, Jeannette Tagny, Isabelle Ebanda, Brigitte Gobe, Fadimatou Abdoulaye, Gwendoline E. Burnley and Prudence Chilla.

[viii] Proportion of women diplomats by categories:

Year	2004			2005		
Office	Total	Female	%	Total	Female	%
Minister plenipotentiary	59	3	5.1	59	3	5.1
Adviser of foreign affairs	50	3	6.0	50	3	6.0
Secretary of foreign affairs	111	24	21.1	111	24	21.1

[ix] Statistics reproduced in *Politique nationale genre*, a document published by the ministry of women's empowerment and   family.

[x] The girl child is a reference to particular issues girls face in Cameroon or Africa and elsewhere, including early marriage, female genital mutilation, child labor, sexual and physical abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking, son preference, and discrimination in education, health care and many other areas. There is a legal discrimination on the marriage age: 15 years for female and 18 years for male.

[xi] See the interview of Gwendoline Etonde Burnley in *Cameroon Tribune*, Hors-série, Novembre 2012, p. 78.

[xii] Only 8 women are presidents of political parties out of the 294 legalized as follow:

Year	Number	1995	24	2001	05	2007	11
1985	1	1996	07	2002	04	2008	13
1991	57	1997	21	2003	04	2009	08
1992	15	1998	07	2004	05	2010	20
1993	19	1999	02	2005	09	2011	17
1994	09	2000	08	2006	05	2012	11
						2013	12
Total							**291**

Source: *Cameroon Tribune* N° 10195/6396, October 10, 2012, p. 6 / Political affairs department of the Ministry of territorial administration and decentralization.

[xiii] See Elisabeth V. Tamanjong interview reproduced in *The Post* N° 01368, August 24, 2012, special issue on "Women in politics".

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