



MDDT
Movement for
Democracy,
Development and
Transparency

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Development and
Transparency

MDDT SPARKS

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EDITORIAL COLUMN

MDDT SPARKS is a medium that MDDT
uses to communicate information on its
activities and to circulate news concerning
global development. It is published once
every two months by MDDT and is
distributed online and in hard copy to
members, partners, stakeholders and every-
one else who is interested in development.



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The Editor-in-chief reserves
the right to edit all texts submitted

an MDDT Publication



MDDT & THE "NOT TOO YOUNG TO VOTE CAMPAIGN



THE POWER OF HARNESSING YOUTH POTENTIAL...



AN INITIATIVE OF
YALDA CAMEROON & MDDT

Letter From the National Coordinator

Dear readers of MDDT SPARKS, MDDT members and distinguished MDDT Partners, accept greetings from MDDT Cameroon. In spite of its setbacks, MDDT maximizes its meager resources in sustaining its activities geared towards safeguarding a society of social justice, through the promotion of human rights and democracy in a bid to foster community development and restore livelihoods. As such, MDDT is keen on sharing best practices, and reporting on its most recent endeavors in the promotion and protection of human rights, fostering democracy and engaging youths in peace-building and civilian protection.

The ongoing Anglophone Crisis and Boko Haram insurgency in the English-Speaking and Northern regions of Cameroon respectively, have recently served as a catalyst to human rights abuse and human insecurity across the national territory. The fight for self-determination by advocates for an independent Southern Cameroons; "the Federal Republic of Ambazonia", has escalated with indigenous youths in the South West and North West (ENGLISH-SPEAKING REGIONS) picking up arms, creating rebel groups under the shield of "Self Defense" - albeit in reaction to the excesses of documented repressive military actions. The government in an attempt to preserve the unity the Republic of Cameroon and salvage the sovereignty of the state, has depended more on arbitrary military intervention rather than the widely clamored option for dialogue, negotiation or mitigation as diplomatic measures fundamental under preventive diplomacy in the degeneration of conflict. Arbitrary arrests, abductions and excessive use of force have left a great number of civilians and activists dead, severely tortured, detained and displaced. MDDT through its Legal Clinic has brought together young Cameroonian lawyers to clear the path for justice and freedom for illegally arrested detainees.

MDDT Cameroon is capitalizing on partnering with Civil Society Organizations across Cameroon to advocate for the protection of civilians in the NW and SW regions of Cameroon. MDDT further sees genuine dialogue as an indisputable mechanism to resolving the Anglophone Crisis.

In its mission to promote democracy in Cameroon, MDDT is capitalizing on engaging youths in participating in democratic processes as a measure to harness the youth bulge in Cameroon for a peaceful and prosperous Cameroon. MDDT is taking on a project "The Not Too Young To Vote Campaign" (NTYTVC) geared towards creating a platform of at least two million eligible young Cameroonian voters, through which they will be mobilized to vote and run for the 2023 legislative and municipal elections. The NTYTVC will also advocate for electoral justice for a free, fair and transparent elections.

At a time when things seem to be falling apart in Cameroon, youths being radicalized, there is the current experience of a degeneration of peaceful protests to armed conflict with a great loss of the lives of youths both civilians and military. Thousands of civilians have fled their homes to neighbouring Nigeria serving a refugees. Rural-Urban Exodus is at its peak in the North West and South West Regions. These represent indicators of human insecurity and the urgency of the need for civilian protection. MDDT is currently building partnerships to advocate for civilian protection and dialogue.

Since 2011 the world has been a deeply contentious place. However, violent conflicts do not no longer serve as the most appropriate means to change. From Tunis to Tahrir square, Zuccotti Part to Ferguson and from Kurkina to Hong Kong, movements worldwide have drawn on the lessons of Mahatma Gandhi's salt march, Martin Luther, and Nelson Mandela on non-violent resistance in the push for change. This is same spirit MDDT is breeding through the Not Too Young To

Vote" Campaign.

Dear readers this is just an insight of the entire picture. This edition of MDDT SPARKS through its articles will fill you in with the practical measures taken by MDDT to effectively impact its communities in the domains of human rights, democracy and Peace. Visit our website to contact us and communicate with us through our social media platforms so that together we can build the Africa we want, an integrated prosperous and peaceful Africa.



Clifford N. Akonteh
MDDT National
Coordinator

Below:
YALDA Cameroon



Engaging Youth Leaders Across the Globe with YALDA

ENGAGING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

PROMOTING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE THROUGH YOUTH ENGAGEMENT.

Peaceful coexistence connotes a state of harmony between diverse groups living side by side. The pursuit of peace and harmony through the concept of peaceful coexistence finds concrete expression in the purposes of the United Nations charter guaranteed by respect for sovereignty, justice, democracy and the rule of law. Peaceful coexistence within a national context relates to the effective management of diverse groups (political, religious and ethnic cleavages) with the goal of creating a harmonious environment conducive for settlement and the pursuit of happiness. Cameroon is a secular and multi-ethnic country which has sought varied models of governance to achieve a sense of national identity. Present day Cameroon is founded on a union between former British Southern Cameroon and the French administered Cameroon, which agreed to coexist under a federal constitution that will safeguard the unique cultural peculiarities of the two nations.

The ongoing crisis/conflict in the Southern Cameroon, has raised concerns about the state of peaceful coexistence between anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians. The crisis which started as a set of grievances brought about by

Anglophone lawyers and teachers on the francophonization of the educational and legal system, progressively morphed into demands for external self determination.

Promoting peaceful coexistence in these circumstances remain an uphill task which requires a comprehensive approach to tackling the crisis through meaningful dialogue, demilitarization, truth and reconciliation measures and the renegotiation of a governance system that will provide constitutional safeguards for peaceful coexistence between the anglophone regions of Cameroon and french speaking Cameroon. It is within these complex and challenging circumstances that the Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency (MDDT) continues to mobilise youths across the country through the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa (YALDA) platform. MDDT explores all available spaces to rebuild confidence among youths from different backgrounds through cultural and diversity programs geared towards peace-building. MDDT continues to mobilise young Cameroonians through the "Not Too Young to Vote" campaign which seeks to transform

youth engagement into electoral participation as a constructive way to address their discontent with the governance approach in Cameroon. The movement also engages in debates, panel discussions and mentorship programs that address the issue of empathy as a confidence building measure among youths from different backgrounds in Cameroon.

By Christian L. Fonye



Empowering, inspiring and engaging Youth Leaders from Top: Hon. Akonteh, the founder & Board chair of MDDT

ADVOCATING FOR ELECTORAL INTEGRITY & LEGITIMACY

- An MDDT PERSPECTIVE -

Democracy in recent times is being rated as the most conducive political system for sustainable peace and development, with free, fair and transparent elections being one of its fundamental principles. It is true that after the Cold War, the democratic tradition of elections has grown across the globe with most elections being held in Africa. It is also true that within the last few decades, Africa has experienced lapses in its definition of free and fair elections. Political systems that do not manifest the principle of separation of power and the rule of law as check mechanisms breed social, economic and political instability. Despite ratification of United Nations and African Union Charters on the norms of democracy, elections remain a paradox within nations, living double standards and jeopardizing their very own electoral integrity.

The growing distrust in electoral systems has mounted build-ups to pre and post electoral conflict. Kofi Annan puts it in clear-cut terms when he says, "We must admit democracy is undergoing a crisis". He further quotes the works of Larry Diamond, the Economist Intelligence Unit and Freedom House on the fact that democratic freedoms have been in retreat for eleven straight years in many parts of the world, with the emergence of an increasing number of elected authoritarians.

The legitimacy of elections lies in the definition and interpretation of key terms, "Free", "Fair" and "Transparent". There are questions that must be answered for these terms to have meaning. How accessible is registration to voters? Are elections truly representative of the ideals and expectations of the people? Is the environment conducive? Is the electoral commission independent? Can the electoral system be held accountable? Is transparency guaranteed for the elections?



MDDT Cameroon is taking on the "Not Too Young To Vote Campaign" to advocate for electoral integrity through promoting representative, participatory and transparent elections in Cameroon.

"NOT TOO YOUNG TO VOTE CAMPAIGN"

This project addresses voter apathy and Antipathy amongst youths in Cameroon, which serve as early warning signals of unrest, violence and war. Voter apathy is a clear-cut indicator of limited and manipulated democracy. Cameroon has a population of about 26 million citizens, 60% comprising the youthful population, 35% of whom are above voting age (20 years), making about 65% of the total population above voting age. However, less than 5 million citizens have voted in the last 2 presidential elections within a duration of 14-21 years. As per World Bank statistics, in the 2004 presidential elections, out of an estimated voter population of about 16,000,000, 4,657,748 persons registered to vote while 3,830,272 actually voted. In the 2011 Presidential elections, 7,251,651 registered to vote, while only 4,951,434 voted. This display of non-participation by youths is an indication of antipathy with potential for unrest due to their disgruntlement with the fact that their ability to express their opinion via the Ballot box is constantly abused.

The root causes of voter apathy amongst others are: Lack of trust in the electoral system, bureaucracy and bottlenecks in registration, lack of targeted sensitization, poor citizenship education and lack of patriotism, inadequate communication and use of youth friendly media (social media), poor accessibility to interior rural communities due to poor roads and lack of staff and means by political parties and ELEGAM. The youthful population is now infested with a syndrome and mindset of antipathy in a regime branded as a dictatorial regime.

MDDT has been facilitating the registration of eligible voters and mobilizing them to participate at all levels. It is however a great challenge in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon where the Anglophone Crisis has deteriorated into armed conflict registering hundreds of civilian and military deaths, 90% of whom are youths. MDDT is seeking partnerships and support to advocate for dialogue and civilian protection. These are some of the early warning signs of pre and post electoral conflict if not properly managed.

Con't on Page 4

Below: Youth Alliance for Leadership & Development in Africa (YALDA)



Berse Blandine, MDDT member & NTYTV Ambassador at Model UN Italy
Right: NTYTV Ambassador at YALI West Africa



...the national territory in pro-active ways of promoting peaceful co-existence during the May 2018 YALDA General Assembly, hosted in partnership with MDDT Cameroon in Buea; and Bishop Nkea giving talks on the theme: "Fighting Youth Extremism through cultural integration and inclusive governance.."

THE WINDOW DIARIES

DISCUSSIONS ON THE RESOLUTION OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

The WINDOW DIARIES is a serial publication extracted from a paper by one of our members which seeks to offer insights and guidelines in the search for solutions to the Anglophone crisis. It approaches the crisis from a blunt but objective perspective while believing in the power of truth, intellectual honesty and emotional intelligence for a judicious address of all issues relating to the crisis. It also believes in the search for common ground and the need for sacrifice and compromise as the bargaining ideals for mutually equitable resolutions. Assuming that our readers are already familiar with the origin and evolution of the crisis, we shall proceed on this first publication with an introduction to the subject of "DIALOGUE".

CHAPTER ONE: DIALOGUE

Dialogue from a very basic perspective can be understood as a conversation between two or more people. Within the context of global politics and diplomacy, the term carries far greater significance as a mechanism solicited for use in the resolution of conflicts between rival parties with a common interest. As such, it refers more often to a situation wherein parties to a strife or conflict hold talks to discuss their differences. Dialogue can be considered an exclusive dispute resolution method with greater focus on the parties directly involved within an enabling environment for them to deliberate and seek out solutions to the issues affecting them.

THE POWER OF DIALOGUE IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

CONSIDERING the "Anglophone Crisis" which is our present concern, dialogue has been proposed, stressed upon and encouraged by national voices and the international community as the best means of addressing the crisis in general and the issues that have set the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon on a path of separation from the other eight French-speaking regions in particular. As reports of the overwhelmingly atrocious excesses of the national armed forces in the two regions continue to pile up, so too, the impact of the armed factions representing "The Republic of Ambazonia" is on a steady rise and drawing closer to the urban areas by the hour. With more state troops being deployed regularly to the Anglophone regions, the "Amba-fighters" equally seem to be growing in number which can be interpreted as an expression of their determination to fight back in what has been termed "acting in self-defense" of Ambazonia.

With the crisis intensifying daily, many more civilians and soldiers are killed, villages abandoned, homes burnt down, properties destroyed, civilians displaced, arrested and detained etc. Looking at the growing intensity of these ramifications of a crisis that has, beyond all expectations, dragged on for over 18 months, one wonders if at all, dialogue alone can resolve the conflict. Unless all rival parties (or identifiable factions) involved can find room to accommodate each other and address the root causes of the crisis towards a fair and equitable solution, this crisis will continue changing in dimension and intensity with the now indisputable potential for spill-overs into other Francophone regions with grievous consequences - particularly in the light of upcoming October presidential elections.

If the calls for dialogue are being repeated and amplified daily, it is not only in a timely bid to prevent a regrettable escalation of the crisis from its currently dreadful state; it is also because dialogue is considered one of the most potent tools to effect change no matter the circumstance. In this age and time, the spoken word has immense power and is readily available to humanity as one of the most effective ways of resolving conflicts. It is therefore a compelling task to ensure that dialogue be promptly engaged towards ending this crisis. However, for meaningful & purposeful dialogue to be achieved, an appropriate and effective regulatory framework for peace and mutual trust must first be sought and implemented so as to minimize and control the devastating effects of violence between the actors while simultaneously fostering an enabling environment for subsequent talks.

To be continued in our next edition.

by Walters Shashan B. Mbinglo



ADVOCATING FOR ELECTORAL INTEGRITY & LEGITIMACY

Con't from page 3

MDDT is facilitating the registration of eligible voters and mobilizing them to participate and run as candidates. It is however a great challenge in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon where the Anglophone Crisis has deteriorated into armed conflict registering hundreds of civilian and military deaths, 90% of whom are youths. MDDT is seeking partnerships and support to advocate for dialogue and civilian protection. These are some of the early warning signs of pre and post electoral conflict if not properly managed. (flip these last 2 sentences - cause and effect)

Electing municipal leaders, parliamentary leaders and the president is a catalyst for justice and sustainable peace. The people's voices are unequivocally represented at all levels. This project directly addresses goal number 16 in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, in line with providing a safe environment and atmosphere inclusive, participatory, nondiscriminatory democracy and good governance. It also affirms the views of Aspirations 3 and 4 of the African Union Agenda 2063 on the route to a peaceful and prosperous Africa characterized by the respect of human rights, democracy and human security.

To uplift Cameroon's electoral integrity, the right to a free and fair elections must not be compromised. It is imperative to re-mobilize, re-galvanize and reach out to the middle class and the youths, build an independent and trusted electoral system, create a peaceful and conducive environment to project the legitimacy of Cameroon's democratic processes.

By Clifford N. Akonteh

CELEBRATING OUR MEMBERS

Poubom Rehbeh Esq.

Rehbeh earned a Bachelor's degree in Law from the University of Buea in Cameroon. He possesses a Certificate of Call to Bar from the Nigerian Law School and proficiency certificate in Dispute Resolution from Dispute Resolution Associates Ltd in Nigeria. Rehbeh is an advocate of the Supreme Courts of Nigeria and Cameroon. He is founder and managing partner of Poubom and Partners Law Firm where he launched the Cameroon Law Laboratory

and Education initiative to increase access to justice, educate and create employment. Rehbeh has over five years of experience in the nonprofit sector working on human rights, community development, youth empowerment and peace building issues. He is International Secretary for the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa was recently elected Executive Director of the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa-Cameroon Branch.



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