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Enhancing Strategic Communication on Civilian Protection and the Right to Securing and Reducing Victimization of Students in Conflict Infested Zones



INSIDE THIS EDITION

Understanding Strategic Communication In Times Of Conflict

Spotlight: Student Victimization In Conflict Infested Zones

Strategic Communication Strategies for Civilian Protection & Reducing Victimization of Students in Conflict Zones

Testimonials from Individuals Affected by Conflict in the North West and South West Regions

Recap of key points discussed in the Newsletter

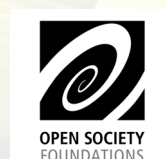


CONTENTS

- LETTER FROM EDITOR.....3
- UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF CONFLICT *By Barrister Clifford NibaAkonteh*.....4
- SPOTLIGHT: STUDENT VICTIMISATION IN CONFLICT INFESTED ZONES *By Besong Christelle*.....6
- STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR CIVILIAN PROTECTION & REDUCING VICTIMIZATION OF STUDENTS IN CONFLICT ZONES *By Shalo Hedwig Yondu*.....11
- TESTIMONIALS FROM INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY CONFLICT IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTHWEST REGIONS *By Maureen Dunghu*.....20
- RECAP OF KEY POINTS DISCUSSED IN THE NEWSLETTER *By Bidias Manuela Andrea*.....22

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LETTER FROM EDITOR

Dear readers,

As we mark the fourth edition of our newsletter on Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, I am honored to share with you the most recent developments in our efforts to amplify the voices of victims of conflict and promote effective communication strategies for civilian protection.

In this edition, we shine a spotlight on the plight of students in conflict-infested zones, highlighting the devastating effects of victimization and the urgent need for strategic communication to reduce these incidents. Our featured article, "Spotlight: Student Victimization in Conflict Infested Zones", provides a powerful narrative of the experiences of students who have been caught in the crossfire, and it is a stark reminder of the importance of our work.

Our newsletter also delves into the concept of strategic communication in times of conflict, exploring how effective communication can be a game-changer in reducing civilian casualties and promoting peace. In "Understanding Strategic Communication in Times of Conflict", we examine the key principles and strategies that can help us achieve this goal.

Moreover, we are pleased to share testimonials from individuals affected by conflict in the

Northwest and Southwest Regions, which provide a personal and poignant glimpse into the human cost of war. These stories serve as a powerful reminder of why our work is so crucial, and they inspire us to continue striving for a world where civilians are protected and respected.

Finally, our newsletter features practical tips and strategies for civilian protection and reducing victimization of students in conflict zones, providing a roadmap for individuals, organizations, and governments seeking to make a positive impact.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed to this edition, including our writers, researchers, and partners. Your dedication to this critical issue is what drives us forward, and I am grateful for your commitment to amplifying the voices of those affected by conflict.

As we move forward, I invite you to join us in our mission to promote civilian protection and reduce victimization in conflict zones. Together, we can make a difference and create a safer world for all.

Thank you for reading this newsletter. I hope you will find it informative, inspiring, and thought-provoking.

Sincerely,



Walters Shashan Mbinglo
Legal and Communications Director

Walters Shashan Mbinglo is the Marketing and Communication Officer for MDDT-Cameroon. He is a 39 year old bilingual Cameroonian who hails from Bamenda in the North West Region. He is a practicing lawyer/legal consultant with a firm academic and professional background in Law, spanning over 10 years in different capacities. His professional experience cuts across consultancy, corporate law practice, project financing, litigation & trial monitoring. As such, his practice covers corporate/ business, labour, arbitration, family, probate, criminal, real estate, human rights areas. Shanshan has a passion for networking, capacity enhancement and developing business and community solutions. He has worked with several diverse corporate entities, Cameroonian administrative authorities, the civil society, socio-cultural agencies and other private organizations.



UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

By Barrister Clifford NibaAkonteh

The World, Africa and Cameroon are currently experiencing an outburst of conflict with very devastating effects on the rule of law, human rights, economic and political stability, civilian protection and the right to security. The Republic of Cameroon is currently plagued by the Anglophone Crisis in the North West and South West Regions and the BokoHaram Crisis in the Far North, which has led to thousands of deaths, thousands of internally displaced persons, an escalation of human rights violation proliferating radicalization and recruitment of thousands of youths into armed groups.

Considering the rise in political hostilities, increased acts of terrorism, destruction of properties and break down of the rule of law, failed dialogue attempts, the state is prioritizing a military solution resulting in a shrinking space for effective advocacy with increased victimization of human rights defenders (HRDs) and Civil Society Activists. Armed groups and Separatist fighters have resorted to kidnapping, killings, torture and harassment of the civilian population as a militia tactic with total disregard of the right to security. Communities, and Social Media are unsafe for freedom of expression and advocacy strides.

There is an urgent need for strategic communication for effective advocacy on the denouncement of human rights violations and call for a ceasefire and peaceful resolution of most especially the Anglophone crisis. It is indeed crucial to understand strategic communication in times of conflict.

Dr. Kristin Johnson in her book "Strategic Communication: An Introduction." She defines strategic communication as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission." This definition emphasizes the intentional and planned nature of communication activities that organizations undertake to achieve their goals and objectives. Strategic communication involves aligning messaging, channels, and tactics to effectively reach target audiences, manage relationships, and drive desired outcomes.

In times of conflict, strategic communication plays a crucial role in managing the flow of information, shaping public perceptions, and influencing outcomes.

It involves carefully crafting messages to navigate complex and sensitive issues, maintain transparency, and build trust among stakeholders. Strategic communication

In conflict situations aims to de-escalate tensions, address misinformation, and foster dialogue for peaceful resolutions. In times of conflict, examples of strategic communication tactics may include:

Crisis Messaging: Crafting clear and consistent messages to address the situation at hand, provide updates, and reassure stakeholders.

- **Dialogue Facilitation:** Engaging in structured conversations with conflicting parties to promote understanding, find common ground, and negotiate peaceful resolutions.
- **Information Management:** Controlling the flow of information to prevent misinformation, manage perceptions, and maintain credibility.
- **Conflict-sensitive Reporting:** Working with media outlets to ensure balanced and responsible reporting that does not exacerbate tensions or perpetuate biases.
- **Peacebuilding Communications:** Designing campaigns or initiatives that promote reconciliation, tolerance, and constructive dialogue among affected communities.
- **Humanitarian Communication:** Disseminating critical information about relief efforts, resources, and services to affected populations in a conflict zone.

- **Nonviolent Communication:** Utilizing principles of empathy, active listening, and constructive language to de-escalate conflicts and foster peaceful interactions

This goes a long way to manage negative and violent perceptions; reconstructs and builds trust between parties; prevents misinformation and manipulation; propagates dialogue and conflict de-escalation; mobilizes humanitarian aid and in all plays a crucial role in peace-building.

MDDT Cameroon in collaboration with Open Society Foundation (OSF) is promoting strategic advocacy for civilian protection and the right to security and Strategic communication remains key as it mobilizes civilians, law enforcement officers, armed groups, and policy makers to distant themselves from human right violations and the disregard for international humanitarian law (The Law of Conflict) in the Anglophone and Northern Regions of Cameroon. In a bit to expose practitioners to best practices, this newsletter exposes MDDT Cameroon's successful communication strategies employed in subsequent articles.



Clifford Akonteh
National Director

Akonteh is the National Coordinator of the Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency.

He is a Cameroonian lawyer and managing partner of Poubom and Partners Law Firm, with over 10 years of civil society experience in the promotion of human rights and democracy.

He is the founder of The Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa (YALDA) in Central Africa and Francophone countries, a youth leadership African network in 40 Universities and 26 Countries.

Akonteh is the initiator of the "Not Too Young to Vote Campaign" a digital innovation to mobilize 2 million youths, to vote, run for elections and restrain from electoral violence. He is 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow (MWF), elected Chairperson of its Regional Advisory Board, overseeing alumni activities in 21 African Countries and advisory contact of USAID and IREX. He is the Former President of the Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni Association Cameroon.



SPOTLIGHT: STUDENT VICTIMISATION IN CONFLICT INFESTED ZONES *By Besong Christelle*

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon has had a profound impact on the lives of students, leaving over 200,000 students displaced and forced to flee their homes as of 2024 (UNICEF, 2024). As a result, many students have been denied access to education, with a staggering 75% of schools in the Northwest region and 60% in the Southwest region being either occupied or destroyed (UNESCO, 2023). This crisis has resulted in a significant decrease in enrollment rates, with only 40% of children in the affected areas attending school (UNICEF, 2023). According to a recent report by the Cameroon Ministry of Education(s), over 150 schools have been destroyed or occupied by armed groups in the Northwest and Southwest regions since 2017, leaving thousands of students without access to education. Furthermore, many students have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, where they face

significant challenges in accessing education. The human cost of this conflict is devastating, with students suffering from trauma, displacement, and exploitation. It is essential that we highlight the experiences and challenges faced by students in these regions, and work towards finding solutions to address this crisis. This spotlight aims to shed light on the plight of students affected by the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, and highlight the efforts being made by organizations like MDDT Cameroon to promote peace and stability among students.

Case Studies: Student Victimization in the Northwest and Southwest Regions

The conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions has resulted in the displacement of thousands of students, many of whom have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that many schools



have been destroyed or occupied by armed groups, leaving students with limited access to education.

In the Northwest region, for example, several schools have been occupied by armed groups, leading to the displacement of thousands of students. Many of these students have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, where they face significant challenges in accessing education.

In the Southwest region, the situation is equally dire. Many schools have been destroyed or occupied by armed groups, leaving students with limited access to education. In addition, many students have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, where they face significant challenges in accessing education.

Experiences and Challenges Faced by Students in Conflict Zones

The experiences of students in conflict zones are heartbreaking and alarming. Many students have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, where they face significant challenges in accessing education.

In addition, many students have been forced to drop out of school due to financial constraints, lack of access to education, and other forms of exploitation.

One student who has been affected by the conflict is Ms. Ndi, who was forced to flee her home in Bamenda after her school was occupied by armed groups. She was forced to flee her home without any belongings, including her school uniform and textbooks. She has been living in a refugee camp for several months, where she has limited access to education.

Another student who has been affected by the conflict is Mr. Ngam, who was forced to drop out of school due to financial constraints. He was studying at a university in Bamenda when the conflict broke out, but he was unable to continue his studies due to financial constraints. He has been living in a refugee camp for several months, where he faces significant challenges in accessing education.

MDDT's Efforts to Sensitize Schools and Create Peace Clubs

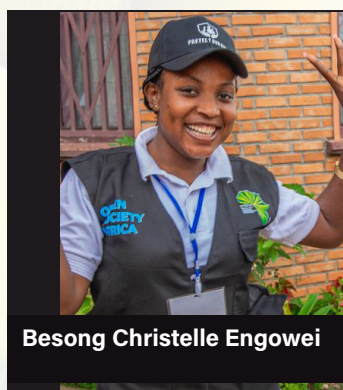
In response to the crisis affecting students in the Northwest and Southwest regions, MDDT Cameroon has launched several initiatives aimed at sensitising schools and creating peace clubs. These initiatives are designed to promote peace and stability among students and provide them with a safe and supportive environment for learning.

In total, MDDT Cameroon has sensitised over 20 schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions through its peace clubs initiative. The organisation has also provided training for teachers and school administrators on how to

create peaceful environments for learning.

The peace clubs initiative has been successful in promoting peace and stability among students. The clubs have provided a safe and supportive environment for learning, where students can discuss their experiences and challenges without fear of persecution or reprisal

The clubs have also provided a platform for students to share their stories and experiences with others. This has helped to create a sense of community and solidarity among students, which is essential for promoting peace and stability



Besong Christelle Engowei

Besong Christelle Engowei is an Advocate-In-Training of the Cameroon Bar Association, and a dedicated project coordinator for MDDT CAMEROON. She is experienced in organizing regional symposiums and leading peacebuilding initiatives. With a Master's degree in International Law, she effectively promotes peace and stability. Her volunteer work includes organizations like Reachout, HUMFRIE, Bodytalk International, YALDA-UB, and being Miss FREEMIND Center. Through these engagements, she advocates for peace, youth advocacy, peer counseling, and humanitarian activities. Overall, Besong is a driven advocate for peace and positive change.

Conclusion

The situation faced by students in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon is dire. Many students have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, where they

face significant challenges in accessing education. However, there are glimmers of hope. MDDT Cameroon's efforts to sensitise schools and create peace clubs have been successful in promoting peace and stability among students





STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR CIVILIAN PROTECTION & REDUCING VICTIMIZATION OF STUDENTS IN CONFLICT ZONES *By Shalo Hedwig Yondu*



A. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR CIVILIAN PROTECTION

In the conflict-infested NW and SW regions of Cameroon, the protection of students and youths is of utmost importance. The ongoing Anglophone crisis has left these vulnerable groups at risk of violence and disruption to their education. Strategic communication plays a vital role in advocating for their protection and ensuring their right to security. This article will explore various methods of communication and provide insights into engaging with key stakeholders for effective communication in the context of the NW and SW regions of Cameroon.

Methods of Communication to Advocate for Civilian Protection

Public Awareness Campaigns: Public awareness campaigns tailored to the specific context of the NW and SW regions of Cameroon can be highly effective in advocating for the protection of students and youths. These campaigns should utilize local languages, cultural references, cultural events, sports activities, and relevant channels such as community radio stations, television, social media, town hall meetings, and community events.

By raising awareness about the risks students and youths face in the region, we can mobilize support and create a sense of urgency for action.

Community Engagement: Engaging with local communities is crucial for effective communication. This can be done through community meetings, focus groups, and

dialogue sessions. By actively listening to the concerns and experiences of community members, particularly parents, teachers, and community leaders, we can tailor our communication strategies to address their specific needs. This approach fosters trust and ensures that the voices of the affected civilians are heard.



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Partnerships with Media: Collaborating with media outlets can amplify our message and reach a wider audience. Press releases, interviews, and feature articles can be used to highlight the importance of civilian protection and the need for action. By working closely with journalists and media organizations, we can ensure accurate and responsible reporting on the issue.

Digital Platforms: In today's digital age, online platforms play a significant role in communication. Utilizing websites, social media platforms, and email newsletters can help disseminate information, share

updates, and engage with a global audience. It is essential to create compelling content that resonates with the target audience and encourages them to take action.

Advocacy Networks: Building strong advocacy networks is crucial for effective communication. Collaborating with like-minded organizations, NGOs, and civil society groups can amplify our message and increase our collective impact. By joining forces, we can advocate for policy changes, raise awareness, and mobilize resources to protect civilians in conflict-infested zones.



Engaging with Key Stakeholders and Decision-Makers for Effective Communication

Government Officials: Engaging with government officials at the local, regional, and national levels is essential for advocating for civilian protection. By establishing relationships with key decision-makers, we can influence policy changes and ensure that the right to security is prioritized. Meetings, policy briefings, and workshops can be organized to present evidence-based recommendations and highlight the importance of civilian protection.

International Organizations: Collaborating with international organisations such as the United Nations, humanitarian agencies, and human rights organisations can strengthen our advocacy efforts. These organizations have the resources, expertise, and influence to support our cause and advocate for civilian protection on a global scale. By engaging with

them, we can leverage their networks and amplify our message.

Community Leaders: Engaging with community leaders is crucial for effective communication at the grassroots level. They have the trust and influence within their communities, making them valuable allies in advocating for civilian protection. By involving them in decision-making processes and empowering them with knowledge and resources, we can ensure our message reaches the most vulnerable populations.

Academia and Research Institutions: Collaborating with academia and research institutions can provide us with valuable insights and evidence to support our advocacy efforts. By partnering with experts in the field, we can strengthen our arguments, develop data-driven strategies, and influence policy changes. Research papers, conferences, and seminars can be organized to share findings and engage with the academic community.



Donors and Philanthropic Organizations:

Engaging with donors and philanthropic organizations is crucial for securing financial support for our advocacy initiatives. By demonstrating the impact of our work and showcasing the importance of civilian protection, we can attract funding and resources. Regular communication, impact reports, and donor meetings can help build strong relationships and ensure long-term support.

In conclusion, strategic communication is vital for advocating for civilian protection and reducing victimization in conflict-infested zones. By utilizing various methods of communication and effectively engaging with key stakeholders and decision-makers, we can amplify our message, mobilize support, and ensure the right to security for all. Together, let us work towards a world where every civilian, especially students, can live in peace and security.



B. Reducing the Victimization of Students in Conflict Zones: Focus on the NW & SW Regions of Cameroon

In the conflict zones of Cameroon's Northwest (NW) and Southwest (SW) regions, students face significant challenges. They are often subjected to violence, displacement, radicalization, and disruption of their education. It is important to prioritize initiatives and programs that protect students in these conflict-affected areas. By addressing the unique needs and vulnerabilities of students in the NW & SW regions of Cameroon, we can work towards reducing their victimization and ensuring their safety and well-being.

Initiatives and Programs for Protecting Students in the NW & SW Regions of Cameroon

Safe School Declarations: The government of Cameroon, in collaboration with international organizations, should sign and implement the Safe School Declaration specifically for the NW & SW regions.

This commitment ensures that schools in these areas remain safe spaces for education, free from attacks and military use. By promoting and implementing this declaration, we can protect students and provide them with a conducive learning environment.

Enhanced Security Measures: Schools in the NW & SW regions should implement enhanced



security measures to ensure the safety of students. This includes establishing security protocols, training teachers and staff on emergency response, and implementing early warning systems. Additionally, the presence of trained security personnel can help deter attacks and provide a sense of security for students.



PROTECTOUR OWN

**BAMBILI
BALI NKWEN
BAFUT NDOP
MENCHUM**

- NO** to unfair prosecutions,
- NO** to arbitrary arrests,
- NO** to abductions,
- NO** to extremism,
- NO** to indiscriminate killings,
- NO** to torture,
- NO** to property destruction.



Psychosocial Support Programs: Conflict zones often leave students traumatized and in need of psychosocial support. Implementing programs that provide counselling, trauma healing, and emotional support can help students cope

with the psychological impact of violence and displacement. These programs should be integrated into the school curriculum and involve trained professionals who are sensitive to the cultural context of the NW & SW regions.

Community Engagement: Engaging with local communities is essential for protecting students in the NW & SW regions. Community members, including parents, teachers, and community leaders, should be involved in decision-making processes and actively participate in initiatives aimed at ensuring the safety of students. This collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for protecting students.

Education in Emergencies: Despite the conflict, education should be prioritized in the NW & SW regions of Cameroon. Implementing education programs in emergency settings, such as temporary learning spaces or mobile schools, ensures that students have access to education despite the challenging circumstances. These programs should be flexible, adaptive, and tailored to the specific needs of students in the NW & SW regions.



Recommendations for Improving the Safety and Security of Students

Increased Security Presence: The government of Cameroon should increase its security presence in the NW & SW regions to protect students and schools from attacks. This includes deploying security forces to vulnerable areas, conducting regular patrols, and establishing security checkpoints near schools.

Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns: Conducting awareness and sensitization campaigns in the NW & SW regions is crucial to educate students, parents, and communities about the importance of education and the need to protect students. These campaigns should focus on promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, and respect for education.

Teacher Training on Conflict-Sensitive Education: Teachers in the NW & SW regions should receive training on conflict-sensitive education. This training equips them with the skills and knowledge to create safe and inclusive learning environments, address conflict-related issues in the classroom, and promote peacebuilding and reconciliation among students.

Infrastructure Rehabilitation: The government, in collaboration with international partners, should invest in rehabilitating and reconstructing damaged school infrastructure in the NW & SW regions. This includes repairing classrooms, providing adequate furniture and equipment, and ensuring access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

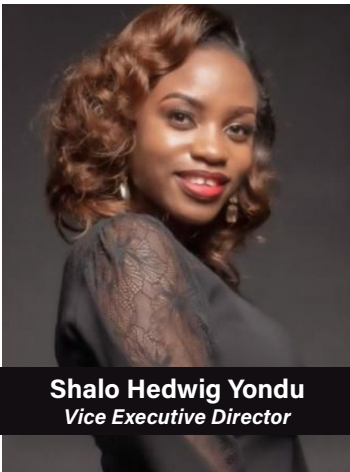


Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups:

Efforts should be made to engage with non-state armed groups operating in the NW & SW regions to ensure the protection of students and schools. Dialogue and negotiation should be pursued to establish agreements that prioritize the safety and security of students and allow for uninterrupted access to education.

In order to reduce the victimization of students in conflict zones such as the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, we need a comprehensive approach. This

should include measures such as safe school declarations, enhanced security, psychosocial support programs, community engagement, and education in emergencies, all of which can help create safer environments. We can improve safety by increasing security presence, running awareness campaigns, providing teacher training, rehabilitating infrastructure, and engaging with non-state armed groups. Prioritizing student protection ensures their right to education and promotes well-being.



Shalo Hedwig Yondu
Vice Executive Director

Shalo Hedwig Yondu is the Vice Executive Director of the Movement for Democracy, Development, and Transparency (MDDT) Cameroon. She brings exceptional leadership and a deep commitment to human rights, social justice, and inclusive governance to her role. Shalo holds a Master of Science Degree with a diverse educational background in fields such as geology, oil and gas engineering, and process safety risk management. Leveraging her expertise in data analysis, research, project design, and community development, Shalo effectively addresses complex challenges and drives impactful change. During her tenure, she has spearheaded numerous initiatives through MDDT focused on strengthening the rule of law, promoting peace, and protecting human rights in Cameroon. Notable projects aim to enhance access to justice, empower marginalized communities, and give voice to youth in civic and political processes. Shalo's advocacy prioritizes the rights of children and women, who she believes play a critical role in building more equitable societies.



TESTIMONIALS FROM INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY CONFLICT IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS *By Maureen Dunghu*

Reports from international institutions indicate that global wars and challenges seem to be on the rise. Amongst these recorded global challenges is the ongoing crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon which has left so many civilians as IDPs with many of them living in very pitiable conditions. Below are some extracts from international and national of the recorded testimonies of some victims who have been hit very hard by the ongoing crisis.

- **“My name is Samuel,** I am from the South West Region of Cameroon. The crisis has practically shattered my family’s life. We were forced to flee our home due to the escalating violence. My children have been traumatized by the sounds of gunfire and the loss of a sense of security. We pray for peace to return and a chance to rebuild our lives. The suffering is too much.”
- **“My name is Amina** and I am from the North West Region of Cameroon. My family and I have been deeply affected by the ongoing crisis. We have witnessed violence, displacement and loss of loved ones. Our once very peaceful community has been torn apart, and the constant fears has taken a toll
- on our mental and emotional well-being we long for the day when we can live without fear of conflict and uncertainty.”
- **“I am Grace,** a resident of the North West Region. The crisis has left me without a home and a livelihood. I have witnessed the destruction of my community and the suffering of my neighbours. The constant fear and uncertainty have taken a toll on my mental health. I long for the day when I can live without fear of conflict and displacement.”
- **“I am Sarah,** a mother from the North West Region. The crisis has separated me from my children and my loved ones and forced us to live in constant fear. I worry about the future of my children and the impact of the crisis on their well-being. I pray for an end to the violence and the chance to rebuild our lives in peace.”
- **“I am Emmanuel,** a young man from the South West Region. The crisis has disrupted my education and my dreams for the future. I have seen friends and family members lose their lives or become displaced. The violence has robbed us of our sense of normalcy and security. Despite the challenges, I hold onto

hope for a better tomorrow."

- **"My name is Joseph,** I come from the South West Region of Cameroon. The crisis has brought immense suffering to my community. We have experienced loss, displacement and a sense of hopelessness. The conflict has disrupted our way of life and shattered our sense of security. We yearn for peace and the opportunity to heal from the trauma we have endured."

These testimonials highlight a profound impact of the crisis on individuals in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. Most of these stories are a reflection of the deep physical, emotional and psychological damage of the ongoing crisis. There is therefore the dire need for action that shall bring an end to the conflict and once again restore peace for a convenient livelihood of the citizens at large.

Stories of Resilience and Hope in the Face of Challenges

In Spite of the plights, plaques and storms that have come with the prevailing Anglophone crisis, there do exist stories of resilience and hope amidst the challenges clouding the North West and South West Regions. Most local communities are buried in fear. have been kind enough and in solidarity have opened up their doors and received other victims who have suffered greatly as a result of the crisis. They have gone a long way to offer these people shelter, food and basic needs for daily survival. In the face of these adversities, the people have portrayed their determination to overcome these challenges.

Most of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have been forced to flee their homes have demonstrated a strong ability to remain resilient. They have been caused to abandon their homes, livelihood, possessions and communities yet they

have shown strength in their ability to adapt to the new circumstances around them. They have remained united in their new communities where they have settled as IDPs and are helping each other to rebuild their lives. They have engaged in different ways to find different ways to sustain themselves amidst the uncertainties.

Also, a good number of victims have demonstrated a strong sense of resilience in the face of personal tragedy. Persons who have lost their loved ones and some have been injured badly in the course of the conflict. Yet they have demonstrated resilience and remained supportive to their families. These persons have shown remarkable courage and determination and continue to serve as beacons of hope in their communities.

To add to these stories of personal resilience, there are some identifiable collective efforts to overcome the challenges in the North West and South West Regions. Community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and even religious groups have been very instrumental in providing support to some affected communities. They have provided, shelter, clothing, medical care and food to the most vulnerable victims. This is a great demonstration of collective action in the face of adversity.

Irrespective of the challenges plaguing the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, the people continue to show resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Their stories serve as personal testaments and yet give strength to some whose spirits of resilience have been broken. Through their strength and perseverance, they offer hope for a better future and serve as an inspiration to us all who have remained determined.



Maureen Z.E. Dunghu is an Advocate-In-Training of the Cameroon Bar Association and also a Masters Degree holder in International Law from the University of Buea. She is a duly trained and certified Child Protection Officer. As a para-legal she takes special interest in matters related to human rights, humanitarian affairs and the protection of women and children at large. Her interest and serviceability toward the organizations has contributed to the success stories of MDDT.

Maureen Z. E. Dunghu
Assistant Program Director



RECAP OF KEY POINTS DISCUSSED IN THE NEWSLETTER (by *Bidias Manuela Andrea*)

The newsletter addresses the widespread conflict in the world, Africa, and specifically Cameroon, focusing on the devastating effects on human rights, economic stability, and security. In Cameroon, the Anglophone Crisis and Boko Haram insurgency have led to widespread deaths, displacement, and human rights violations, further escalating radicalization and terrorism. The government's prioritization of military solutions has limited effective advocacy and increased victimization of human rights defenders and civil society activists, underscoring the need for strategic communication to promote peaceful resolutions and civilian protection.

Strategic Communication in Conflict:

Dr. Kristin Johnson defines strategic communication as the purposeful use of communication to fulfill an organization's mission, which is crucial in times of conflict to manage information, shape perceptions, and influence outcomes. Effective strategic communication tactics include crisis messaging, dialogue facilitation, information management, conflict-sensitive reporting, peacebuilding communications, humanitarian communication, and nonviolent communication.

Advocacy Efforts by MDDT Cameroon and OSF:

MDDT Cameroon, in collaboration with the Open Society Foundation, is advocating for civilian protection and security rights through strategic communication, focusing on discouraging human rights violations and promoting respect for international humanitarian law.

Effective Communication Strategies in Conflict Zones:

1. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Utilize local languages and relevant channels to raise awareness about the risks faced by students and youths.
2. **Community Engagement:** Active listening and dialogue with community members ensure communication strategies meet specific needs.
3. **Partnerships with Media:** Collaborate with media for accurate and responsible reporting to amplify messages.
4. **Digital Platforms:** Use online platforms to disseminate information and engage a broader audience.
5. **Advocacy Networks:** Build strong networks with NGOs and civil society groups for collective impact.

6. Engaging Key Stakeholders: Collaborate with government officials, international organizations, community leaders, academia, donors, and philanthropic organizations to prioritize civilian protection.

Protecting Students in Conflict Zones:

To reduce the victimization of students in Cameroon's NW and SW regions: - Implement safe school declarations to ensure schools are safe zones.

- Enhance security measures in schools.
- Provide psychosocial support programs for trauma healing.
- Engage local communities in protective initiatives.
- Ensure education continues in emergency settings through temporary learning spaces or mobile schools.

Recommendations for Improving Student Safety:

- Increase government security presence in conflict zones.
- Conduct awareness campaigns on the importance of education and student protection.
- Train teachers on conflict-sensitive education.
- Rehabilitate and reconstruct school infrastructure.
- Engage with non-state armed groups to ensure the safety and security of students.

The article concludes by emphasizing the critical role of strategic communication in advocating for civilian protection and reducing victimization in conflict zones. Effective communication and stakeholder engagement are vital for ensuring the security and well-being of civilians, particularly students in conflict-affected areas like Cameroon's NW and SW regions.

Call To Action For Promoting Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in Conflict Zones:

FOR STAKEHOLDERS:

1. Technology and Innovation:

- Geo-fencing and SOS Apps: Develop mobile applications that allow students and civilians to send SOS alerts and their location to a network of responders in case of danger.

2. Cultural Sensitivity Training:

- Facilitate workshops aimed at understanding local traditions, languages, and customs to ensure communication strategies are culturally appropriate and respectful.

3. Mobile Justice Units:

- Implement mobile courts and legal aid clinics that travel to remote conflict zones,

ensuring access to justice for victims and reducing impunity.

FOR YOUTHS:

1. Youth Peace Ambassadors:

- Engage youths as peace ambassadors who can mediate conflicts, promote dialogue, and advocate for the protection of their peers and communities.

2. Youth-Led Digital Campaigns:

- Utilize social media to create campaigns and movements that highlight the impact of conflicts on their lives, compelling global attention and action.

3. Peer Support Networks:

- Develop informal networks or clubs where youths can provide emotional support,

share safety tips, and assist each other in times of need.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Psychological First Aid Training:

- Train community members and educators in psychological first aid to offer immediate emotional support to those affected by violence.

2. Emergency Kits for Schools:

- Equip schools with emergency kits containing medical supplies, communication devices, and basic necessities to handle any immediate crisis.

3. Conflict Journalism Training:

- Offer specialized training for journalists on reporting in conflict zones, ensuring they can safely and effectively cover stories without exacerbating tensions.

4. Peace Clubs and Activities:

- Establish peace clubs in schools where students partake in activities that promote understanding, tolerance, and nonviolent conflict resolution.

5. Interactive Safety Drills:

- Implement interactive and realistic safety drills in schools, teaching students how to respond during various types of threats.

6. Utilize Arts and Sports:

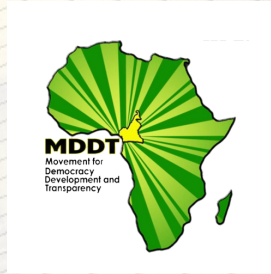
- Use arts, music, and sports as tools for peacebuilding, enabling expression and interaction among youths from different communities.

By implementing these tangible and innovative strategies, stakeholders, policymakers, and youths can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to civilian protection and conflict resolution.



Bidias A Zock Manuela

Bidias A Zock Manuela is a passionate youth civic and peace activist dedicated to fostering democratic values and sustainable peace across Africa. With a strong academic background in research, political sciences, and conflict resolution, she emphasizes youth inclusion in diplomacy, governance, and politics. As the Program and Communication Director at TEGA Cameroon, Bidias leads initiatives to educate and empower the younger generation, preparing them to become future leaders. Her strategic communication skills ensure the organization's mission resonates with its audience. In her additional role as Assistant Communication Director for MDDT Cameroon, she promotes transparency, democratic values, and governance reforms. Her contributions have been vital to advancing the organization's goals and enhancing its national presence. Bidias remains a staunch advocate for youth empowerment, actively participating in platforms that encourage young people's involvement in decision-making processes.



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