



Re-evaluating the Legal and Institutional Complications Affecting the Protection of Women's Rights in Cameroon: The Need to Remedying the Odds

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Submitted: Sept 13, 2023; Reviewed: Des 11, 2023; Accepted: Mar 20, 2024

Article's Information

Keywords:

Assessing Legal, Institutional, Complications, Women's Rights, Protection, Cameroon.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.25041/plr.v5i1.3186>

Abstract

Several complex legal and institutional issues beset preserving women's rights in Cameroon. Women's rights refer to a wide range of ideals and entitlements intended to guarantee gender equality and encourage women's full involvement and empowerment in all spheres of society. These rights include freedom from violence, equality, education, health, and body autonomy, among other things. However, even with the modern conception and advancement of today's society, women continue to be treated inhumanely, uncaringly, and pitilessly, thereby affecting their status and rights acquired in today's society, with the numerous legal instruments wavering from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on the Welfare of the Child, and hosts of other condemning the illegal practices experienced by women on the international scene. The increase in violations continues to be rampant. With all the praiseworthy struggles instigated and affected by these instruments, the degree of violation of women's rights is increasing and increasing in Cameroon. Women continue to experience violations of their rights, especially those related to Female Genital Mutilation, Sexual

Abuse, Rape, widow practices, and many other harmful practices. The query one would be posing here is in searching why Cameroon is considered a State of Law, devouring great efforts in certifying that women anguishing from the effect of violence should be protected, continue to experience an increase in cases of women's rights violations. In this vane, it will be sufficient for us to assess the various legal and institutional dispositions put in place by the State of Cameroon in handling cases of violence done against women. It is surprising that with all the laws initiated by the State of Cameroon from the Constitution, the Penal Code, the Labour Code, the Civil Status Registration Ordinance, and the Civil Code enacted to deal with cases of violence done on Women, there exists no concrete and concise law handling matters of violence against women. The situation of child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Breast Ironing, Widow Practices, and Property Discrimination continue to be a nightmare and a pandemic to eradicate in the country, irrespective of the efforts introduced by competent authorities. There is a need to redress the situation for a better protective climate for women and their societal statuses.

A. Introduction

The issue of combatting violence against women has been of great essence to the Cameroonian Government. They believe our problem nowadays is not just being a part of a treaty, Convention, covenant, or declaration. In showing its commitment and engagement in respecting human rights laws, the country saw the need to ratify laws dealing with women's treatment.¹ An example of such efforts is in 2012 when Cameroon ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa², with the main objective being to eradicate and combat all inhumane, degrading, and discriminatory practices done on women. The standard and phenomenon are really surprising that ever since the country ratified this Protocol, the country, till this moment, has done nothing to establish or enact a law or bill that comprehensively addresses violence against women even though a draft law addressing violence against women and gender-based discrimination is under

¹ Lenta, P.B., & Tchoungui, C.M.N.S. (2016). *The Protection of Women's Rights in Cameroon: An Analysis of the Legal Framework*. African Journal of Legal Studies, 9(2), 1-24.

² This is otherwise known as the Maputo Protocol

consideration.³ The country has, however, enacted some laws about different forms of violence against women, such as rape, sexual harassment, inheritance, and even those related to female genital mutilation. In 2012, the Government drafted a National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, provided health and financial assistance to victims, established and operated a hotline for victim support and reporting cases, and implemented awareness-raising activities at the national and local levels.

In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. International conventions and treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), have played a crucial role in advocating for women's rights and encouraging governments to take action. While Cameroon is a signatory to CEDAW and has made efforts to align its laws with international standards, the implementation and Enforcement of these laws remain inadequate.⁴ The country has enacted various legislations aimed at protecting women's rights. The Constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of gender, and prohibits discrimination based on sex. Additionally, specific laws have been enacted to address issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and female genital mutilation. However, despite these legal provisions, women continue to face significant barriers when seeking justice due to factors such as corruption within the judicial system, lack of awareness about their rights, and societal stigmatization.

Moreover, customary practices deeply rooted in Cameroonian society often perpetuate gender inequalities and contribute to the violation of women's rights. Traditional norms regarding marriage, inheritance, and property ownership tend to favor men over women.⁵ Polygamy is still prevalent in many communities, leading to unequal power dynamics within households and exacerbating issues such as domestic violence and marital rape. Furthermore, harmful practices like breast ironing, where young girls' breasts are flattened to delay their sexual development, continue to be practiced in some regions despite being outlawed.⁶

To this effect, the violation of women's rights in Cameroon has far-reaching consequences that extend beyond individual women. It hampers the country's development by limiting women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Gender-based violence and discrimination also perpetuate a cycle of poverty and inequality, hindering progress towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This article will delve into the various dimensions of women's rights violations in Cameroon, analyzing both the legal framework and the institutional setbacks that have contributed to promoting and encouraging cases of violence against women.⁷ By shedding light on the challenges faced by Cameroonian

³ There is no unique or uniform law in Cameroon that handles issues related to violence against women in Cameroon, the laws are still scattered in different legal instruments in the country making it difficult in handling or combatting cases of violence against women

⁴ Fombad, C.M., & Nkwi, P.N. (Eds.). (2010). *Gender and Law in Cameroon: Towards Equality for Women?* Langaa RPCIG

⁵ Kamga, S.D., & Ndi, G.A. (2018). *The Role of Customary Law in the Protection of Women's Rights in Cameroon: An Appraisal of the Challenges and Prospects*. African Journal of Legal Studies, 11(2), 139-161.

⁶ Banda, F., & Chinkin, C. (2017). *Gender, Equality and Cultural Rights: Intersectionality and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Human Rights Quarterly, 39(2), 343-375.

⁷ Anyangwe, E. (2007). *Gender Violence and Human Rights Violations in Cameroon: A Case Study on Violence against Women*. Journal of International Women's Studies, 8(4), 1-17.

women and identifying areas for improvement, it is hoped that this analysis will contribute to ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and protect women's rights in Cameroon.

Despite the Government's efforts in combatting female violence, there is a high prevalence of violence against women throughout the country, in large part due to inadequate legislation to address the problem and even a lack of systematic action to eliminate stereotypes and harmful practices that discriminate against women. The rule remains that aspects of violence against women in Cameroon are omnipresent and complicated, making much doubt whether one day, this huge pandemic and load that is embedded in the Cameroon government will be something of the past. A glaring illustration is the study carried out in 2018: out of 2,570 women, 995 (38.7%) reported physical violence, and 381 (14.8%) reported sexual violence.⁸ These data match more recent statistics, including a study from Douala-based La Maison des Droits de l'Homme that approximately 39% of women suffered from physical violence in 2008,⁹ thus indicating that little has been done to stem the epidemic of violence against women over the years. The vast majority of victims are women, as they account for 92% of domestic violence victims in Cameroon.¹⁰ The Government of Cameroon has failed to engage in effective criminal investigation and prosecution of discriminatory and harmful acts done on women. Cameroon's Penal Code does not specifically criminalize domestic violence.¹¹ In the absence of a specific criminal violence provision, victims are thus left to rely on the general assault provisions in the Penal Code, which addresses murder¹², aspect of grievous harm¹³, assault causing death¹⁴, assault causing grievous harm¹⁵, simple harm¹⁶, failure to assist women abandoned by their husbands¹⁷, and even cases of assault of a pregnant woman.¹⁸ Marital rape is not a crime under Cameroon law.¹⁹

Although general assault and murder provisions are available, legal system actors' practices show a failure to prioritize the prosecution of domestic violence. Domestic violence is generally considered a private matter by the community and law enforcement, and it is rarely addressed at the level of the courts for these same reasons.²⁰ Harmful practices also perpetuate domestic violence as men, at times, defend their use of domestic violence because of the bride

⁸ Alio, Amina P., et al, "Association between intimate partner violence and induced abortion in Cameroon," 112 *International Journal of Gynaecology & Obstetrics* 2 (Feb. 2018).

⁹ 159NGO Report On the implementation of the ICCPR (Replies to the List of Issues, available at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/GeED_Cameroon_HRC99.pdf (last visited August 20, 2013).

¹⁰ L'Association Camerounaise des Femmes Juristes, *Lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes au Cameroun: Une mobilisation Considérable*, Justice & Solidarité, July 2012, p. 4.

¹¹ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Cameroon, U.S. Department of State (2012), at 27; Beijing + 15, "The Stance of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business," *Gender Power and Development*, July 2010, pg.36.

¹² Section 275 that deals with simple murder and Section 276 that handled cases of Capital murder

¹³ Section 277 of the Penal Code

¹⁴ Ibid, Section 278 of the Penal Code

¹⁵ Ibid Section 279

¹⁶ Ibid Section 280

¹⁷ Ibid Section 282

¹⁸ Section 338 of the Cameroon Penal Code

¹⁹ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Cameroon, U.S. Department of State (2012), at 27.

²⁰ Beijing + 15, "The Stance of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business," *Gender Power and Development*, July 2010, pg. 35-36.

price they paid for their wives.²¹ In its 3rd Periodic Report, the Government of Cameroon points out the 2010 indictment of one defendant, a police officer, for murdering his wife, a magistrate.²² While the prosecution of this single offender for domestic violence homicide is a welcome step toward offender accountability, the Report makes no other reference to or mention of prosecution for the hundreds of other domestic violence cases in Cameroon.

Moreover, victims of domestic abuse have little recourse for protection. No domestic violence law in Cameroon would provide women with an order for protection against their abusers.²³ The Family Code that was drafted in 1997 to address issues of domestic violence has remained on the shelf.²⁴ Stakeholders see this failure to adopt the law as a lack of political will to address domestic violence.²⁵ Women seeking to escape violence through divorce are hindered by the fact that spousal abuse is not a legal ground for divorce.²⁶ Other government practices also create additional obstacles for victims seeking safety. In its Report, the Cameroonian Government provides marital and family mediation services in marital or family disputes. It notes that counseling and mediation units processed 17,000 cases and settled 3,668 “amicably.”²⁷ It is well-documented, however, that mediation is problematic and dangerous for domestic violence victims because the assumptions underlying the use of mediation do not apply when there has been domestic violence. Mediation assumes that both parties are equal, yet an abuser holds tremendous power over a victim. This power imbalance between the parties cannot be remedied, even with the skills of a trained mediator. During mediation, the abuser can easily control the victim through the use of signals known only to the couple. Also, a victim is often afraid and reluctant to voice her concerns. Further, mediation focuses on future behavior, and many mediators do not allow the victim to address past issues of violence. This furthers the victim’s sense of personal responsibility for the abuse and undermines the accountability of the abuser.²⁸

More than half of women (55%), since the age of 15, have been physically abused mainly by their husbands or partners.²⁹ While it is true that the current husband/partner (51%) remains the principal perpetrator of physical violence, the most recent husband/partner (16%), father’s mother or wife (15%), or the husband of the mother (14%) and the sister or brother (12%), teachers (8%) are the other perpetrators of physical violence against women.³⁰ Of the women who have had sexual intercourse, 20% were forced to have their first sexual intercourse, and 30% had sexual intercourse before the age of 15.³¹ Overall, 41% of women reported that they

²¹ Johnson Takwa, Teke. 2009. “Violence Against the Women and the Girl Children in Cameroon.” Poster presented at the International Conference on Population, 27 September-2 October 2009, Marrakech, Morocco, at 5, <http://iussp2009.princeton.edu/papers/90344>.

²² 3rd Government Report within the Framework of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, para. 505

²³ Nisha Giridhar, *The Global Spread of Domestic Violence Legislation: Causes and Effects* (Spring 2012), at 20, http://politics.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/4600/Giridhar_Nisha.pdf.

²⁴ Written Communication with Ndi Richard Tanto, Ecumenical Service for Peace, Aug. 20, 2013.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Cameroon, U.S. Department of State (2012), at 27

²⁷ 3rd Government Report within the Framework of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, paras. 446, 506.

²⁸ *Mediation*, StopVAW, Feb. 2008, <http://www.stopvaw.org/Mediation>

²⁹ Institut National de la Statistique (INS) et ICF International, *Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples*, Calverton, Maryland, USA, INS et ICF International, septembre 2012, pp. 327-328.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.329.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 333

were aged 15 to 49 at the time when they first experienced sexual abuse, and 19% were 10 to 14 years old at the time of the experiment.³² A 34% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 were physically assaulted, only 8% were sexual assaults, and 21% were both physical and sexual.³³ Among pregnant women, 14% of women reported experiencing violence during pregnancy; among women in a union or a break-up, a total of 60% of women have experienced physical, sexual, and emotional violence by their current or most recent husbands.³⁴ According to the National Institute of Statistics in 2016,³⁵ in the last 12 months before the survey, 29% of women have been physically abused; almost two out of three women reported being physically abused at any time. 11% of women were victims of sexual violence and 33% of emotional violence. Among women in the union, 40% said they had injuries. The occurrence of injuries as a result of acts of physical or sexual violence is 43%.

This research uses a doctrinal legal analysis methodology doctrinal law analysis methodology. The research applied secondary data in the form of an international Convention regarding women's rights, literature, and court decisions. An analytical description was conducted to explain women's rights in Cameroon based on the international Convention and national law. The data required in this research was collected using the literature study method. This research aims to re-evaluate the legal and institutional complications affecting the protection of women's rights in Cameroon. This research is necessary to correct all kinds of disparities in Cameroon and even the world.

B. Discussion

1. An Assessment of the Various Legal and Institutional Inflexities Affecting Women's Rights Protection in Cameroon

The rule stands that there have been complaints in which legal instruments and laws continue to be a serious threat and problem related to opposing aspects of violence in Cameroon. Others complain about the contradictions in the Violence against Women in Cameroon instruments. The question we should be asking remains what the Government has been doing domestically to curb this pandemic, tackling women and female children's rights in Cameroon. We all know and understand that the State of Cameroon has established a series of increased laws, legal provisions, and institutions with overlapping mandates in various documents regarding protecting women's and children's rights in its territory. Notwithstanding the available legal instruments and initiatives laws, international instruments have remained the main instruments that this State should use in regulating the treatment of women and children within the State. With all these laws, for a long period, women continue to experience oblivion and obsoleted practices done on their fundamental human rights and status. Women and children in Cameroon continue to experience aspects of violence, discrimination, and illegal practices on their womanhood, which has become of questionable character. We know many will be putting their blame on the various laws that the State of Cameroon has enacted and established on issues related to women's violence, but that is a mere misjudgment in our legal

³² Ibid., p.330.

³³ Ibid., p.334.

³⁴ Ibid., p.337

³⁵ Institut National de la Statistique (INS) et ICF International, Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples, Calverton, Maryland, USA, INS et ICF International, septembre 2016, pp. 327-328.

analysis. The main tricky and concern here is establishing whether all these civil, labor, criminal, customarily, and otherwise laws are done in a way that conforms with those prescribed by international instruments in which Cameroon is a party and signatory. The answer given here will surely be in the negative cause of what use laws will be enacted and even ratified when they cannot even suit the current situation and climate of the country as issues of violence against women continue to escalate and be an aspect of immediate concern. This is an aspect of hallucination and continuous nightmares that is difficult to eradicate. The worst scenario is the so-called Penal Code in the country, which does not even prosecute issues related to violence against women. What an ironical pendulum and devastating platform.

2. A Difficult and Misapprehension of the Various Legal Instruments in Cameroon

The tendency is that there are many instruments illustrating and combatting matters and issues of violence against women, not only at the international, regional, or Cameroonian level. We have a plethora of these instruments in all areas. Let's take a good look at the international level, where we have the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention Against Torture, the Convention on the Right of the Child and a host of other international laws in which Cameroon is not only a signatory but equally ratified. Even at the Regional level, we have the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Convention on the Welfare of the Child, and even the Maputo Protocol, all dealing with violence against women and the need for States to respect these laws and provisions put in place.³⁶

Looking also at the domestic level, many laws and instruments have been enacted like the Cameroon Constitution, Penal Code, Civil Code, Labour Code, Civil Status Registration Ordinance, Southern Cameroon High Courts Law, and a series of increased laws in dealing with issues of domestic violence or violence against women. We are not saying that these laws are not essential. They are and need to be commendable and appraise the efforts of the State of Cameroon in having beautiful laws and legal initiatives in handling violence against women. The 1996 Constitution ensures that all duly ratified instruments signed and ratified by Cameroon take priority over domestic laws.³⁷ Our worry here is that these laws are just so numerous, and because of this, it becomes confusing and questionable, where there is no situation of effectiveness and competence since all these laws expect member states to respect and execute those violations that will amount to breach off fundamental rights and instruments. Maybe the State of Cameroon was signing and ratifying all these instruments unconsciously, insensibility to the implications when dealing with violence on women's rights and protection.

1) The Impracticalities in the Implementation of the Various Legal Platforms

It will be, and always be, impracticable to use all these laws that deal with women's violence to combat situations of violence and abuse of women's rights at all levels. We cannot and will never refuse or question the fact that the objective and responsibility of the Cameroon

³⁶ Regional instruments in which Cameroon has duly signed and ratified and binding in its laws.

³⁷ Article 45 of the Cameroon Constitution stipulates that duly ratified treaties takes precedents over national or domestic laws.

Government in issues of human rights protection is to ensure that violence against women should be championed and even eradicated. The problem nowadays is the provision and existence of too many laws and instruments, which destroy the whole combatting process as law enforcement officers are confused about which law should be applicable. It is the beautiful intention of the law to create and ensure that violence against women should be combatted and even eradicated, as it constitutes a violation of the fundamental rights, status, and dignity of womanhood. The diversified nature of different laws and instruments in combatting violence against women in Cameroon has made it difficult for the State of Cameroon to combat violence against women. Fantastic, great, and plausible is the existence of all these laws on violence against women, but the problem faced is rather at the stage of recognition and application. The worst of them lies in the fact that these laws or instruments do not have the same connotations and meaning, making it difficult and complex to handle cases of domestic violence or violence against women. Handling cases of violence against women is not as easy as we can imagine. Talk less of combatting it, and when a standard law cannot be determined or varieties in the operation of the laws relating to it, it becomes more complicated. Violence against women is an issue complex in nature and of questionable character as it encloses a wide range of understanding to society and the world at large. It is becoming more complicated when looking at the numerous instruments put in place to combat this silent crime in Cameroon. All of these instruments provided in combating violence against women are inconsistent, diverse, and indifferent in their application and appellations, rendering combatting these crimes cumbersome, problematic, and even impossible.

2) The Situation of Adultery: a Complex and Frustrating Environment

Talking about the concept of adultery, there are lots of controversies surrounding its understanding when dealing with women's rights, protection, and status. Take a good look at the provision of the penal Code in its Section 361, which provides that a woman systematically commits adultery but is only punishable when committed by a man if it is habitual or takes place in the marital home, even though such situation has been amended by the new Penal Code of 2016.³⁸ Taking a good look at this provision, it is against punishing the crime of adultery when committed by the husband as emphasis is made as to the circumstances where the sexual intercourse of the husband will amount to adultery. The law has to use the word habitual elsewhere and in sex anywhere to amount to adultery when they know that it will be difficult for the husband to admit adultery through direct eye witness. It, therefore, means that if this husband commits adultery just once, it will not be a valid ground for the wife to bring an action against the husband for adultery. The law has provided an exception to what will amount to adultery, meaning that the women will continue suffering violence and threats from the husband whenever issues of adultery are brought up. The law also emphasizes that the adultery case must take place in the marital home; what about sexual intercourse carried out by the spouse outside the marital home? Does this mean that it will not amount to adultery?³⁹ The situation

³⁸ Section 361 of the Cameroon Penal Code

³⁹ The new Penal Code law of 2016 amending the provision of the 1967 law on adultery. Unlike the 1967 penal code which punished women simply for having sex with individuals other than their spouses, but equally punished men only if they had sex at home or habitually elsewhere with someone other than their wives, the new law punishes both men and women equally for sex with third party irrespective of where or how often. According to **Section 361** of the new Code provide that:

becomes even more complicated in establishing the crime of adultery in the case of customary marriages. On what ground can a spouse bring an action against the husband under customary law? There is no evidence that the wife can institute an action since it will be difficult to prove adultery and the fact that customary law allows or encourages the husband to marry as many wives as he thinks fit. The man or husband will never feel guilty of adultery unless the sexual intercourse occurs with another man's wife. There will always be that defense by the husband that his extramarital relationship with a single woman is that he intends to marry her. It will concretely be difficult for the wife to bring an action for adultery against the husband for infidelity, which stands only in the case where the husband abandons her. The situation here is even that it is difficult to prove adultery using a direct witness, as it becomes practically difficult to see the husband and another wife other than his wife in the marital home or elsewhere committing adultery. Most of the law depends on some circumstances presumed, which cannot amount to adultery.

3) The Aspect of Matrimonial Rape, a Delicate Situation to Handle

The fact that marital rape, or the so-called spousal rape, is the act of sexual intercourse with one's spouse without the spouse's consent. Having sexual intercourse with the spouse without consent will amount to rape. This marital rape, in all its implications, is considered in most instances as domestic violence and sexual abuse. The common law rule of marital rape exemption is based on the cultural view that marriage makes a woman part of her husband's property, so forced sexual intercourse is but a husband making use of his property. Taking a good base in the case of *Achu vs. Achu* Inglis J in the Court of Appeal South West Region held that:

Customary law does not countenance the sharing of property, especially landed property, between husband and wife on divorce. The wife is still regarded as part of the husband's property.

That conception is underscored by the dowry payment on marriage and the refund on divorce. Looking at the situation from the dictum above, the wife is reduced to property once the husband has paid the marriage price. Suppose the notion or concept that characterizes a human being(wife) becomes the property of another. In that case, the notion of bringing an action for marital rape will be futile and unnecessary. The husband will not need to customarily be petitioned for rape when it concerns his property being the woman. Right from the day that the marriage is celebrated, the woman has given herself to the husband as a living sacrifice in which she must be available at all times if the husband desires sexual intercourse. Bringing an action for rape is useless. The Penal Code has talked of criminalizing rape in Section 296 of the Code by punishing any person who, by physical or moral violence, forces a woman, including

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- (1) A woman who, being married, has sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband shall be punished with imprisonment for from two to six months or with a fine from 25000frs to 100,000frs
 - (2) A husband who has sexual intercourse with a woman other than his wife or wives shall be punished as provided by subsection 1 above. However, the burden of proof of the existence of polygamous union shall lie with the husband
 - (3) No prosecution may be commenced without the complaint of the wronged spouse. Consent by wronged spouse to resume cohabitation shall put an end to the effects of conviction.

an adolescent, to have sexual relations with him. We are not saying that rape is a good thing that should not be criminalized, but we are dealing with marital rape or rape in matrimony. It is extremely difficult to bring an action against the husband for rape.

The situation becomes provocative as per the provision of Section 297 of the penal Code, which prevents prosecution of rape when marriage has been freely consented to both parties and the assaulted woman was over the age of puberty during the offense. I believe this is discriminatory and encourages the phenomenon of rape since the perpetrator knows that he can rape the woman and consents to get married to her. Criminal proceedings against him will be discontinued. The issue here is that rape is rape, and when the fact or elements of rape, once established, should be punishable rather than giving instances where the rape will not amount to a criminal act. How, then, can we experience combatting when the law is encouraging or allowing the rapist to be free from criminal responsibilities? How, then, can we establish consent in this kind of marriage celebrated where we all know that the initial reasons for the celebration of the marriage derive from the rape incident? The bone of contention here is that it will be difficult for the law or law enforcement officials to have a proper or effective means of combatting when dealing with the offense of sexual violence on the woman. Neglecting certain fundamental aspects of the offense means combatting will become a fiasco and disaster, rendering combatting or eradicating difficult. The Cameroon Penal Code being the watchdog in handling or criminalizing issues of rape or violence against women, is entangled with heaps of infelicities and lacunae in which relying on it as a tool in combatting or handling issues of violence is questionable. The situation is not only with the penal Code; even other areas of the law have still become questionable in matters relating to domestic violence.

4) Combatting Cases of Abortion: a Perplex Scenario in Cameroon

The situation of Abortion is also a serious problem, preventing and slowing down the aspect of violence of men in the country. The Cameroon Penal Code is complicated and confusing when dealing with the offense of Abortion. As rightly stated, Section 337 of the Code provides that:

- a. Any woman procuring or consenting to her Abortion shall be punished with imprisonment from fifteen days to one year or with a fine from five thousand to two hundred thousand francs or with both such imprisonment and fine.
- b. Whoever procures the Abortion of a woman notwithstanding her consent shall be punished with imprisonment from one hundred thousand to two million francs”.⁴⁰

It admits or permits Abortion only when such Abortion is criminalized and applicable if the mother's life is in danger or if pregnancy is the result of rape.⁴¹ This is confusing as we are aware that Abortion is a complex issue. Placing only two circumstances in which Abortion should not be punishable is questionable. There are so many reasons why some women will want to carry out Abortion, as it becomes a threat to their status and rights. What about the situation where the woman is being abandoned by the person who impregnated her and is in the running? The law has not considered the psychological, emotional, and physical trauma that

⁴⁰ Section 337(1) and (2) of the Penal Code

⁴¹ Section 339 of the Penal Code that talks as to the exception of legalising abortion, or where abortion will be acceptable

this woman will go through before setting the ground for criminalizing Abortion. The law fails to understand other circumstances that can affect the woman's status or right in cases of Abortion. The same law is talking about killing a fetus to amount to Abortion. The question one needs to position here is determining at what period of the pregnancy it will amount to killing the fetus or baby. We are not in any way encouraging the concept of Abortion, for we understand, Abortion in its very origin is considered illegal, and many consider it a sin. Our worry here is for the legislation or law to understand that combating violence against a woman is a complex issue that needs to be defined beyond all reasonable doubts to be handled. There are some circumstances in which Abortion might be caused as a result of the violence done to the spouse by the partner. There should be some modifications of Section 339 of the Penal Code to put more visibility on what is meant by severe danger to the mother's life, particularly because the woman's health is not only physical. There can be the inclusion of important issues like the severe fetal malformations incompatible with life, incest, and the reduction of administrative procedure attached to Section 339 of the Code.

5) The Handicap Nature of the Cameroon Judiciary

The laws are there that have provided room or circumstances in which those who commit this violence on women should be punished. It's thus left for the judicial actors like the court, law officials, and other enforcement officers to ensure the total application of the legal text. However, every day, we see cases of female violence ignored and even avoided by these officers. This reluctant nature or aspect of domestic violence actions by the judicial actors constitutes a discouraging aspect of most of the women who do not even see the need to report cases of violence to these actors as they know that nothing will be done to them and thus continuous violations. We believe the judicial actors should be capable of doing what they are vested by the law when issues of domestic violence are concerned. A criminal is a criminal, whether it is the husband or wife.

There is the need to punish in cases of violence against women. What about the situation where the actors of the judiciary are men? It makes it difficult to implement and combat. Most men believe that women are property,⁴² and how can property be property? Because of this, the judicial officers look at women as inferior, thereby finding it difficult to solve the problem faced by the women. The issue of adultery provided for in Section 361⁴³ of the Penal Code as Criminal is insignificant when it comes to law enforcement officials. They still have the conception that man by nature or from origin is polygamist, and committing adultery on the part of the man or husband is normal, which needs not to be over-emphasized. The provision itself is problematic as it provides that for the men to be punished for the act of adultery, the act should have been committed in their homes or elsewhere habitually. This is a falsified and pushed environment for the supposed law enforcement officers to violate the law. The law says for adultery to be committed elsewhere, it must be habitual⁴⁴ as to the men, so when women report cases of

⁴² Customary law position of the law as to property rights which sees women as property and according to this law a property like woman cannot own a property.

⁴³ This section of the law talks about the aspect of adultery which should be punishable

⁴⁴ Thanks to the new law of 2016 amending the provision of the 1967 law on adultery. Unlike the 1967 penal code which punished women simply for having sex with individuals other than their spouses, but equally punished men only if they had sex at home or habitually elsewhere with someone other than their wives, the new law punishes

adultery to the judicial actors, they are reluctant in the context of this provision and sometimes even ignore the law as they claim that they cannot be proof of adultery since having direct evidence as to adultery is always difficult.⁴⁵

6) A Difficult Nut To Crack on Aspect of Force or Early Marriages in Cameroon

Controversially and inexplicable is an aspect that is defying and affecting our Civil Code from its French inception in matters relating to violence, especially against women. It becomes confusing when some basic issues cannot be handled, and an overweighing pendulum is exercised on the woman's status and rights within a given society. A glaring example or illustration here can be examined in the domain of marriage as to parties. The Code provides in Article 52 that the minimum age for marriage is 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys. We know that the definition provided by the 1989 Convention of the Right of the Child, in which Cameroon is not only a signatory but has ratified the Convention, provides in its Article 1 as follows: "Any person who is below the age of 18."⁴⁶

This becomes contradictory as per the Civil Code, which has already fixed the marriage age of women. Even though the same Code provides in Article 49 that girls under 18 are not required to marry, parental consent is sufficient.⁴⁷ This is not a good ground at all in the country as it has given birth to early or forceful marriages since the law allows the parents to push their children to marriage before the prescribed day of the law. The Code has to follow the provision provided by Article 1 of the Convention of the Child, which is considered the ship-anchored instrument of children's rights in the country. The law was not foolish in establishing the minimum age for girls to get married. The law believes that children at that age are still considered *dole incalpax* and lack certain faculties under the concept of marriage⁴⁸ or the contract in which she is entering. This situation of the law has encouraged early marriage and makes it difficult to combat or put an end to these barbaric practices in the country. We find the practices recurrent and practicable in our country, like in the Northern part of the country where they believe it is common to give their girl children for marriage at a tender age. The problem

both men and women equally for sex with third party irrespective of where or how often. According to **Section 361** of the new Code provide that:

- (4) A woman who, being married, has sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband shall be punished with imprisonment for from two to six months or with a fine from 25000frs to 100,000frs
- (5) A husband who has sexual intercourse with a woman other than his wife or wives shall be punished as provided by subsection 1 above. However, the burden of proof of the existence of polygamous union shall lie with the husband
- (6) No prosecution may be commenced without the complaint of the wronged spouse.
- (7) Consent by wronged spouse to resume cohabitation shall put an end to the effects of conviction.

⁴⁵ Family law Lecture Notes, Simon Tabe Tabe where it was established that proving adultery on direct eye witness is difficult, as to the provision of Section 1(2) (A) of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, since it is difficult to proof adultery by mere eye witness, it has provided for circumstances that the petitioner can use and establish and it will still amount to adultery. Situations such as undue familiarities, evidence of spouses, marital confidence, venereal diseases, blood test and a host of others will amount to adultery.

⁴⁶ Article 1 of the Convention on the Right of a Child

⁴⁷ Ashu, E., & Njotang, P. (2016). *The Legal Protection of Women's Rights in Cameroon: An Appraisal of the Legal Framework*. African Journal of Legal Studies, 9(1), 1-23.

⁴⁸ The situation of sound mind, sound memory and sound understanding is very instrumental for there to be a valid celebration of a marriage. The absent of these three elements in the celebration of a marriage will render the Marriage ceremony null and void.

is that even though it is a long-practiced tradition, our laws have also encouraged its practices, making eliminating or suppressing it difficult.

7) The Matrimonial Home and Extensive Power of the Husband

Even the fact that the law gives the husband the right to choose which matrimonial regime to apply in the marriage agreement is a serious problem. According to the Cameroon Civil Code, Article 70 demands that if no choice is made as to the regime of marriage, then the couple is married under common law, which allows polygamy and community of marital property. So even the law is encouraging polygamy, and they want to combat violence; how difficult it is. The situation here is that even if the husband is for the monogamous regime, it doesn't stop him from being polygamous, as we know the general adage that; "all African men by nature are polygamous."

The husband is and will always be considered the head of the family;⁴⁹ he also has the sole right to determine the family domicile⁵⁰and, in the interest of the household and the children, may prevent his wife from taking employment.⁵¹ This situation becomes rebellious and sarcastic, as we all know how it can ridicule the woman to nothing since the husband has absolute authority over their wife by depriving them of some privileges and advantages that she may derive. He thinks that he is the sole contributor of the family and the wife is not in any best position to provide for the family, depriving her of the fundamental right as to the right to work, which is established in many international human rights and conventions that Cameroon has signed and ratified. The Code, in its entirety and realities, gives much power to the husband, who can violate her rights at any time desired. Even the fact that women are deprived of the full use and enjoyment of property is a serious problem,⁵² for the husband has the right to administer communal marital property, thereby giving him the right to sell or mortgage the couple's property without his wife's consent. All these provisions contradict our Cameroon constitutions, especially in its preamble, which provides equal rights to all irrespective of the status, sex, language, or nationality in question. Both sexes have the right to enjoy fundamental human rights, and property right is no exception. It is shameful in our country that no specific laws have been enacted to prohibit violence against women or domestic violence. There are no laws prohibiting traditional harmful practices, and female genital mutilation (FGM) and the practice of breast ironing persist in parts of the North and the South-West of the country.

Although the government report states that Cameroon's body of laws, including the Constitution, embodies the principle of equality between men and women, no legal definition of discrimination is provided by any law. The embodiment of the principle of equality in the preamble of the 1996 Constitution, as amended in April 2008, is insufficient to meet the standards required by CEDAW because discriminatory laws and practices still prevail.

⁴⁹ Article 213 of the Civil Code

⁵⁰ Ibid, Article 108 and 215

⁵¹ Article 74 of the Cameroon Civil Status Registration Ordinance of 1981 provides that a husband may object to his wife's exercise of a trade different from him in the interest of their marriage or children

⁵² Article 1421 and 1428 is a good example of the Code depriving the women from using the matrimonial property. It continues by saying that only the husband has the right to sell or mortgage the matrimonial property, the wife has no right as to the property of the matrimonial home as she herself is considered as a property, and how can a property own a property.

CEDAW is not yet incorporated into national laws. Article 45 of the Constitution states that duly approved or ratified treaties and International Agreements shall, following their promulgation, override national laws. This statement does not confer any rights or redress. Therefore, Enforcement is weak since criminal sanctions must be enacted into law before becoming applicable.

3. Institutional Inconsistencies Upsetting the Fight Against Violence

The challenges faced by violence or the almighty violence done on the women in Cameroon cannot only be blamed on the infelicities or the inability of the various legal machinery put in place to combat these great pandemics on women's rights and status. Two things can affect the effective implementation of rules and regulations within a given society. Either inadequate laws make implementation difficult, or those vested with the competence to effect these laws or instruments are considered incompetent. One of the flaws in combatting domestic violence in Cameroon is at the level of our parochial institutions created to combat this violence. It is either the institutions that lack the various machinery to handle cases of violence or otherwise.

a. The Inadequate Implementation of the Collaboration Platform Between Various Stakeholders in the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence

Fighting and combatting issues related to gender-based violence is not as easy as we think. It's not an issue of one stakeholder combatting it; it needs a whole network and collaboration of stakeholders to handle it. The lack of collaboration between the various stakeholders in combatting domestic violence or gender-based violence is a serious problem. These stakeholders defend their private interests; each wants to demonstrate dominance in combatting violence. A host of actors here, from the State, NGOs, Civil Society, and international Organisations, all have a prominent place and role in the fight against domestic violence. Independent functioning and exercise will help them in no way, as domestic violence is as big as the law. Even though there is somehow a degree of collaboration between the various actors, the efforts are not sufficient to eradicate or combat this serious societal problem affecting female rights. It is unreasonable that those we call NGOs or actors in particular areas are unable to unite to combat this violence, what else of the entire violence placement which the society has seen as a threat to women's status and dignity. Combatting domestic violence, or what is supposed to be called gender-based violence, is a complex and complicated issue that demands lots of effort, mechanisms, strategies, policies, and many other methods.

b. The shortage of resource persons, in number and quality, for the management of victims of violence

The problem of combatting is not only limited to the number of stakeholders available for issues of gender-based violence or the available financial resources in place to handle issues of violence. There is a need for competent, trained, quality personnel who can manage and handle issues of violence. Most of those involved in the fight against domestic violence are there for their interest, and they lack the basic capacity, quality, and interest in handling issues of violence against women. The gamut and degree of violence committed in our society today against women is so numerous that it demands highly qualified personnel to handle the cases at hand. Most of the time, even if the women have to report cases of violence to law enforcement

officials, most of them do not even master the basic tenets of domestic violence principles and rules and talk less about handling and providing solutions to the victims of domestic violence. Some of these so-called domestic violence experts abandon these women along the way, making them not to gain relief from their qualms and difficulties. The Ministry of Women and the Family and Social Affairs are there for the fight against domestic violence in society. The preoccupation here is how many of its personnel are competent and qualified to handle cases of violence in the country. Even institutions created to train personnel in this capacity are lacking and inadequate. The whole issue becomes complicated and complex, and we cannot boast of having the most refined and competent authorities in the country to handle issues of violence against women. Even when cases are sent to our judicial organs vested with the competence to handle abuse cases, they are reluctant to provide the available solution to the cases at hand. This is frustrating and complex.

c. The shortage of shelter and management facilities for women in distress

Fighting or combatting domestic violence demands a lot in terms of materials, infrastructure, equipment, and lots of other. Most centers created to combat violence lack the necessary equipment to carry out their activities effectively. Most of the equipment in their possession sometimes is bad. The internet service is very slow, with few computers and photocopiers, sometimes making photocopying and printing difficult because of their old nature. The little equipment in the center has disturbed a lot, like going off and one when it has been used. This makes things difficult for the center because she cannot keep good reports or statistics of reported cases. There is also no means of transportation, making movement difficult and slow. Most women empowerment centers do not have a service car to facilitate their movement or to follow up on women's projects and outreach education programs in the field, especially those far from their facilities. Sometimes, the vehicles they rent break down due to bad roads. With such difficulty, the interior population still holds on to their old traditions. It keeps on violating women's rights since the center is unable to go to these areas due to the lack of a service car and a good record.

d. Limited cases file and withdrawal

Most of the institutions created to handle issues of violence have a problem with implementing and protecting the human rights and freedom of women because they have to wait for reports or complaints from women before they can carry out their activities. Sometimes, the women who file complaints turn to withdraw due to further violence, and some even refuse that the case should be taken to court. Limited file cases and withdrawal might cause combatting difficulty. The fact here is that most of the women suffering from the abuse of their rights and status find it difficult to report cases of abuse as they fear being mocked by other women in the family or by other family members or friends. Sometimes, pursuing a case is too expensive, and the process is too long. This tends to discourage them. Victims sometimes show the center as weak and that it can only recommend, does not make effective decisions, and is a means of enriching themselves. For example, an overheard conversation between staff of a withdrawn case by the complainer due to threat. Since the victims are afraid of being mocked, they prefer to keep quiet, thereby leading to an increase in domestic violence since the perpetrator knows the partner cannot file a complaint. Most female victims of violence do not

seek assistance. Only 10 % of those who suffer from physical and sexual violence do seek medical care, while 50 % rely on their families for support. Cultural barriers, such as local or religious customs, present perhaps the greatest challenges. The traditional political structure is patriarchal. Generally, having a chief and a council, all male, acting as legislative and judicial bodies is problematic. Many men still believe a woman's place is in the home, not pursuing a political career.

4. Governmental Challenges

The problems of violence are cumbersome and demanding. The Government, as the main organ for handling the issue of domestic violence, has failed. Some of the challenges faced by the Government include the following:

a. Lack of measures by the Government to eliminate Domestic Violence against women

It is surprising that after all the laws from the international and regional levels, duly signed and ratified by Cameroon, and the plethora of laws and instruments enacted at the domestic level in the country, from the constitutional provisions to the penal Code and even at the civil laws, the Government has not been able to battle and suppress domestic violence. The practice is still regarded as culturally acceptable by certain sectors of society, where these women continue experiencing high levels of discrimination, violence, and other related abuses despite Constitutional provisions recognizing the human rights of all. I believe the problem is that the Government of Cameroon has not been able to put in place effective and efficient mechanisms, policies, strategies, and even methods for tackling and handling these pandemics of domestic violence plaguing women's status. As we also emphasize, domestic violence is not something to play with, and it takes lots of effort to deal with on the side of the Government.

b. Lack of Political Will

Where there is always a will, there is always a way. International laws have made huge commitments, and many African countries that have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women have taken huge steps in respecting the provisions of this Convention⁵³ and other related human rights instruments on women's rights.⁵⁴ The question we need to ask here is what Cameroon has done so far in ensuring that combatting domestic violence becomes a priority. There are still many limitations to fully integrating into our national instruments or laws. The Government of Cameroon is reluctant to consider the seriousness of this crime that women face. The laws are dispersed, confused, and even insignificant in terms of implementation when dealing with violence. It will be unspeakable in pronouncing that the country, to date, has not been able to enact a uniform law on domestic violence. Even the so-called family law code that the country has been window-dressing since 2009⁵⁵, and even arousing the appetite of the society to address issues of combatting violence against women, has become a total bogus. How will the Government combat this deadly disease

⁵³ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979, CEDAW

⁵⁴ There are so many of such Human Right Instruments ranging from the International, Regional and National Human Right Instruments which have frown on all the discriminatory practices done against women in the world in general and Cameroon in particular

⁵⁵ The code since 2009 have not been enacted by the government of Cameroon

of violence when the whole incident is more of an inaugurated arrangement? The Government does not see the platform as a priority and consequently has not allocated adequate resources for its implementation. Budgetary allocations to national machinery or critical sectors such as education, health, and agriculture have not been sensitive and sensible to gender differences. Looking at the various state budget allocations, this 2023 budget allocation shows that the Ministry of Women and Family is allocated one of the minimal budgets.⁵⁶ How do we expect such an amount of finance is supposed to aid the ministry in combatting the violence? That is a fallacy and a situation telling us that the dream of combatting violence in our society has a long journey to go, and we are not sure of ever arriving at an acceptable destination.

The most surprising euphoria has been the limited partnership, collaboration, and even dialogue between the Government and civil society organizations regarding implementing the platform for action. The Government has thus continuously used the banking system, which does not bring informed citizens on board. Government ministries charged with gender issues suffer from an acute lack of resources; financial and human resources have been inefficient in implementing the platform for action. We cannot pretend that the State of Cameroon has not contributed colossally in eradicating all forms of violence against women. However, some malpractices, such as breast ironing, Female Genital Mutilation, sexual harassment, physical violence, and more, still exist. In the case of carrying out their mission of protecting and promoting women's rights, they face a lot of roadblocks ranging from inadequate funds and personnel to unawareness, lack of a service car to carry out their activities, and many more. Even though so many laws have been put in place to protect human rights and women's rights in particular, women are still victims of domestic violence. This continues to place a threat on the socio-economic situation of the country since respect for human rights and that of women are indispensable. Therefore, we suggest the following recommendations be considered and acted upon to implement a better human rights culture.

5. Redressing and Reforming Violence Climate Against Women in Cameroon

The problem of violence is real and unavoidable with its increased proliferation that pollutes Cameroonian society. The issue here is not just looking at the female pandemic drone damage to democratic and legal society. Something needs to be done to remedy this deadly plague that has affected the daily lives of womanhood to have a rest and pleasing future for these women undergoing violence in all domains. We know that it will be difficult to eradicate and combat this violence once and for all, but the question remains: what should be done to curb its rate of existence? We believe there are certain categories of persons in society who are supposed to cling as they have those responsibilities in dealing with the issue of domestic violence as they are implicated and involved in its increase and constant abuse.

a. The need for reforming a better society in combatting violence against women in Cameroon

Firstly, the Government should ensure the promulgation of laws for the recognition of the rights of women, and combating domestic violence should be enforced with proper measures put in place to ensure the better promotion and protection of women's rights. This is

⁵⁶ Budget allocated to the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family in 2023 stands at 9 Billion 201 Millions FCFA, source Poise News Desk 2023

because most of our laws are not put into practice, and the laws combating domestic violence are ineffective. So, for the Government to enforce and make these laws effective, it has to adopt certain measures, mechanisms, and policies that will eliminate discrimination against women by implementing awareness programs to segment the population, religions, and traditional rulers. It is always the Government's responsibility to ensure that its citizens' rights and well-being are of prime importance to them, and this can only be done by seeing that the various measures used in combatting domestic violence are effective. They have a series of enacted laws in their various national laws disposition. Those laws are credible and outstanding, but that is not the law's rationale to be a beautiful pendulum. These laws must be implemented to see that violence is taken care of. The only way this can be done is by putting concrete measures in place for implementation.

b. Increasing women's participation in activities affecting the country

We believe the awareness should be that women should be allowed to participate in politics, occupy certain positions in the country, and take part in public activities. This is because most of the high positions in the country are occupied by men, and women are considered not to have the capacity to carry out political activities. They are considered the weaker vessels. So we suggest that if the Government wants to eradicate domestic violence, then it has to allow women to hold specific positions and participate in politics to create that awareness and that sense of belonging. We are not saying women want to compare themselves to men. Still, the issue here is that they should also be given that opportunity to express their rights to society so that if they fumble, the blame should not be on the men as they have given these women the same opportunity.

c. Implementing the various laws on combatting violence Against Women in Cameroon

Looking at the Constitution of Cameroon, many international laws and foreign laws have been ratified and signed by Cameroon, but they are not effectively implemented. This lack of implementation is a problem affecting these women's rights and status in society. The problem faced is whether the increasing rate of domestic violence in society is at the level of implementation, we mean effective implementation. There is so much sentiment and emotional attachment when it comes to implementation. There should not be any pity concerning the law when dealing with issues of domestic violence faced by the victims. Law enforcement officers and the judiciary are sometimes rendering less importance to issues related to violence against women, especially domestic violence, and that has become a serious pandemic in the eyes of the law, making it difficult to combat it at this stage. The rampant and increased nature of the violence was due to the negligence of the so-called law enforcement officers. Most of them mocked the women who suffered from this violence, considering it as not serious.

d. Creation of training schools to educate women on the protection and recognition of their various rights

The creation of more training, professional schools, and even inserting programs in school curricula that will be used to educate the general public on the effects of domestic violence and other legal instruments to protect women and end violence. Once initiated, these programs will enhance the understanding of women's rights and dignity, creating awareness in the public that

there is a need to protect these vulnerable categories of persons in society. Much emphasis is not given to the woman, and there is less talk about promoting her status. Introducing programs for women far back as primary, secondary, and tertiary studies will be of great help at the base since most of these women and individuals are ignorant of the fact that domestic violence is a violation of fundamental human rights and prohibited by the laws of Cameroon, and with this in place, they will now know that violating individual rights is a crime and is punishable by laws.

e. Improving the various resources in combatting violence against women

Again, we have discovered that one of the fundamental problems affecting the effective combat against domestic violence in Cameroon lies in the fact that the Government lacks the necessary resources, especially material resources, to combat violence. Suppose the Government can provide women's empowerment centers with service equipment such as modern computers, printers, and photocopiers. In that case, it will help the center keep good records and better reports of their activities or missions. This is because most of these things used by the centers are outdated and always getting bad. This hinders their promotional and protective activities because good records are not kept, and flyers aren't printed for sensitization.

f. Ensuring the proper investigation of cases of violence against women

Also, the Government should ensure thorough, impartial, and independent investigations on all allegations of human rights violation perpetrators, and anyone guilty of violence should be punished, persecuted, and sanctioned. This will help to reduce domestic violence against women since the perpetrator will be afraid of being punished by the law. The reform of the normative framework aimed at harmonizing domestic laws with international and regional legal instruments ratified by Cameroon is a beautiful scenario for the Government of Cameroon. Laws on domestic violence are so dispersed and scattered, and this makes it more difficult. The several names the law gives these crimes become an issue of questioning. There are so many instruments on domestic violence in Cameroon, including the Constitution, labor code, penal Code, civil status registration ordinance, customary laws, and a host of others. The existence of all these laws doesn't make people conscious about domestic violence. I believe harmonizing the laws that will even conform to those prescribed by international law and instruments will be a laudable initiative on the part of the Government. It is shameful and surprising that a state like Cameroon has no law or instrument on domestic violence, making it difficult to combat. There should be reforms on the part of the laws on domestic violence.

g. The implementation of the platform for joint intervention in the fight against gender-based violence

All the stakeholders in the country dealing with violence against women should be able to establish or create a platform where discussions of domestic violence will be done by proposing measures and mechanisms that will be used in combatting it. We believe this will go a long way in combatting violence. The enhancement of the dissemination of the national strategy to fight against gender-based violence is great and laudable. The Government also uses an action plan every ten years to achieve its goals and activities. This is a great initiative, but

enhancement and dissemination problems exist. How many people in the society are aware of these action plans? I believe most of the population is unaware of this action plan. Even if they know it, it is limited to only a given category of persons. Everybody is supposed to be active in the supposed plan of action for domestic violence as it is a common plague and pandemic affecting society in one way or another.

h. Women were embracing new forms of life.

Women should embrace modern life and stop holding on to their old traditions. Many women still hold on to their old customary laws and do not want to accept change because they are afraid of being punished. But they forget that any law repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience is not accepted by law. The old tradition is still gaining ground because of these ancient beliefs on the side of the women that they are property to their husbands, and the fact that their husbands have paid a symbolic price makes them answerable to them at all times, notwithstanding when they undergo violence from their perpetrators. I believe some parents should not emphasize the concept of bride price, and they should do away with it if they do not want their daughters to continue experiencing violence and assault on the part of their husbands. Some traditions or tribes in the country show a great urge for bride price, where they believe that their daughters are a source of investment for them when marrying them to their prospective husbands. The outcome of this is that there will always be that presence or tendency of violence as the husband will consider the wife as a commodity bought and have the right to deal with it as deemed fit. We are not saying customary law should not have its place, as it is known that all our laws derive their inspiration from customary law, and these laws or customs will be difficult to eradicate or cancel. We emphasize here that there should be some adaptation on the side of the customary law, considering that humans occupy a prominent place in society, and women folk are not an exception. Women should start being recognized as valuable and important, imposing the need to be protected. Rights should be extended to them without discrimination at any level.

i. Women should be more of producers than consumers.

The rule remains that women depend on their husbands once they marry them. I believe this stemmed from the interpretation of Article 74 of the Cameroon Civil Status Registration Ordinance of 1981, which provides that a husband may object to his wife's exercise of a trade different from his in the interest of their marriage or children. These are the modern tenets of life where both parties have to contribute to the welfare and well-being of the family. Depending solely on the husband is and will constitute a ground for assault and violence on the woman. With the over-dependency on the husband, he might become irritated sometimes or tired of the wife's frequent demand for money, and this might cause him to start violating her rights by inflicting pain on her. Therefore, we believe that women should try to engage in income-generating activities such as learning to do hairdressing and tailoring and stop relying on men for their daily upkeep or needs.

C. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the human rights protection climate of women in Cameroon is questionable, and the future occupied by women when dealing with the protection of their rights is unquenchable flames. These women are subjected to so-called inhumane practices and are regarded as frustrated organisms. Truly, the laws of Cameroon are clear from the 1996 Constitution in its preamble, which provides for the equal treatment of all irrespective of their status and sexes they occupy and represent. The laws of the country continue to frown on and consider all practices done on women as discriminatory and inhumane. Even though the laws of the country considered all these inhumane treatment done on women as repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience, they saw the need to combat them. These constant and rampant violations of women's rights in the country have created an environment of questionable character whether the various legal and institutional predicaments climate affecting women's rights and status in Cameroon can be redressed as they continue to undergo cruel, degrading, and evil practices on their fundamental human rights. The question remains controversial and problematic as the future in the protection of women's rights continues to be a nightmare and a difficult nut to crack since many Africans are attached to their tradition, a custom in which the existing practices will continue to be a paddling machine.

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