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Associations and Pressure for Democratic Governance: The Case of Cameroon

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If power holders were poets they would write:

*Oh power,
So sweet to my heart,
Is thy nectar,
That losing thee,
Is the stab of a dagger.*

ABSTRACT

The progress of democracy in any society hinges on pressure from civil society. Given the widely accepted premise that democratic governance is crucial for development efforts to succeed, international donors have since the late 80s, allocated high amounts of funding to civil society organizations (CSOs) in developing countries. Robert Putnam's (1993: 185) argument that associations promote social capital, which "is the key to making democracy work" has greatly contributed in promoting the expectation that international donor support to civil society organizations in the developing world will result in more democratic and better performing governments. Taking the association-rich North West Region of Cameroon as a case, this research examines the extent to which CSOs a sub-Saharan African context possess capacities to pressure for democratic governance. It also analyses how the institutional context – regulations, norms and cultural values – affect the democracy pressure capacities of Cameroon's civil society organizations.

The research shows that on average, CSO pressure for democracy (bottom-up pressure) is low in North West Cameroon, despite the high density of development association in the region. On the one hand, CSOs in the case study exhibit high social capital, in the form of inter-association networking, and collaboration with stakeholder communities. On the other hand, political capital, as well as resource capacity is low among these civil society organizations. The association boom in Cameroon has not produced anticipated improvements in governance, because unlike Putnam's thesis suggests, a high level of social capital is not sufficient for associations to have a positive effect on state administration. The study demonstrates that Putnam's assumption that high political capital invariably accompanies high social capital is incorrect.

To effectively promote democratic governance, efforts aimed at strengthening civil society organizations in Africa must directly challenge the regulatory, normative and cultural institutions that constrain political capital and resources capacity in these associations. Civil society organizations in Africa are more likely to break institutional constraints to democracy when they actively replicate those interventions that have yielded results in their given contexts; and when they make their advocacy efforts *consistent or continuous* over a period of time, as opposed to *intermittent or discontinuous*.

KURZFASSUNG

Der Prozess der Demokratisierung in einer Gesellschaft hängt vom Druck der Zivilgesellschaft ab. Ausgehend von der weitverbreiteten Voraussetzung, dass demokratische Governance ausschlaggebend ist, um entwicklungspolitische Anstrengungen zu erreichen, haben internationale Spender seit den späten 80iger Jahren hohe Geldsummen in die Finanzierung von zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen (CSOs) in Entwicklungsländern investiert. Robert Putnam (1993: 185) argumentiert, dass die betreffenden Vereine soziales Kapital fördern, welches „der Schlüssel zu einer funktionierenden Demokratie ist“, und hat damit dazu beigetragen, die Erwartungen zu fördern, dass die Unterstützung internationaler Spender zur zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen in Entwicklungsländern zu demokratischer und besser funktionierender Governance beitragen wird. Wenn man die Gemeinschaft der Nord- Westlichen Region Kameruns als Fallbeispiel hernimmt, zeigt diese Forschung in welchem Ausmaß CSO's in einem Sub-Sahara Kontext Druck ausüben können, um demokratische Governance zu erreichen. Weiters wird der institutionelle Kontext – Regulierungen, Normen und kulturelle Werte – analysiert, der diese demokratischen Bewegungen, ausgehend von Kameruns Zivilgesellschaftliche Organisationen, beeinflusst.

Die Forschung zeigt, dass der Druck von CSO's (bottom-up Druck) in Nord-West Kamerun in Durchschnitt eher niedrig ist, trotz der hohen Dichte von entwicklungspolitische Vereinen in der Region. Auf der einen Seite verfügen zivilgesellschaftliche Organisationen in diesem Fall hohes soziales Kapital in Form von inter-Vereins networking und der Zusammenarbeit mit Stakeholder Gemeinschaften. Auf der anderen Seite sind in diesen zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen sowohl politisches Kapital als auch Ressourcen knapp. Der Vereins-Boom hat die angestrebten Veränderungen im Governance Bereich nicht herbeigeführt, da, wie von Putnam behauptet, ein hoher Level an sozialen Kapital nicht ausreichend ist um die staatliche Administration positiv zu beeinflussen. Die Studie widerlegt Putnam's Annahme, welche besagt, dass starkes soziales Kapital unausweichlich von hohem starkem politischen Kapital begleitet wird.

Um demokratische Governance effektiv zu stärken, müssen die Anstrengungen die darauf abzielen, zivilgesellschaftliche Organisationen in Afrika zu stärken regulative, normative und kulturelle Institutionen hinterfragen, die politisches Kapital sowie Ressourcen in diesen Vereinen innehalten. Zivilgesellschaftliche Organisationen werden institutionelle Auflagen eher durchbrechen, wenn sie Interventionen wiederholen, die bereits Ergebnisse eingebracht haben und sie ihre Bestrebungen konsequent und konstant über einen gewissen Zeitraum ausüben, anstatt sporadisch und unstetig.

DEDICATION

To

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACDIC	Citizens Association for the Defence of Collective Interests
AIChrisWOV	Aid International Christian Women of Vision
BADO	Bui Association of Development Organizations
BTEO	Bamenda Trade and Economic Operators
CATTU	Cameroon Teacher's Trade Union
CAVOD	Cameroon Alliance of Voluntary Organisations for Development
CIG	Common initiative group
CNU	Cameroon National Union
COMINSUD	Community Initiative for Sustainable Development
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CRCDD	Community Resource Centre for the Disabled and Disadvantaged
CSO	Civil society organization
EC	Empowerment credit scheme
FAMM-Cameroon	Fondation pour l'assistance maladie et maternité
GHAPE	Grounded and Holistic Approach to People's Empowerment
GONGOs	Government-organized non-governmental organizations
IDF	Integrated Development Foundation
MACUDA	Mankon village Cultural and Development Association
MBOSCUDA	Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Organization
MDR	Movement for the Defence of the Republic
NCCOP	National Coordination Committee of Opposition Parties
NDECA	Ngoketunjia Development and Cultural Association
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NW	North West
NWADO	North West Association of Development Organizations
PAFAC	Platform of Actors for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS
PASOC	Support Program for the Structuring of the Civil Society in Cameroon
REFLECT	Re-generated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
SDF	Social Democratic Front
UNDP	National Union for Democracy and Progress
UNOWHURO	Union of North West Human Rights Organizations
UPC	Union of the People of Cameroon
VDA	village development association
WHINCONET	Western Highlands Nature Conservation Network
WICUDA	Wimbum Cultural and Development Association

1

ASSOCIATIONS AND THE PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Democracy has never been handed down to a people on a platter of gold . . . We have set as one of our goals, to rid the Cameroonian society of a system that deprives people from being free men...We call upon you to stand up and be counted amongst those who share our democratic ideal.”

The above were the words of a commoner, John Fru Ndi, (quoted in Konings, 2004: 291) who, together with a group of associates, defied the oppressive Biya regime in Cameroon and launched the first opposition party at a massive rally on 26 May 1990. This event exemplified an unprecedented rise in civic advocacy for democratic rights in Cameroon; and it marked a turning point in the country’s political life. In the month of December of 1990, the government reluctantly responded to the pressures from civil society groups by passing civil liberty decrees, namely, the freedom to form political parties, the freedom of association, and the press freedom laws. Through civic networking, which was mostly done clandestinely, citizens had identified their common interests, built group solidarity and courage, and developed a common strategy to force the government to carry out reform. On the African continent, this rise of opposition to authoritarianism followed by a transition to multiparty politics was not peculiar to Cameroon.

In fact, the early 90s was the era of democratic awakening for sub-Saharan Africa in general. In almost all countries in the sub-continent, there was unprecedented civic mobilization and advocacy for electoral reform, freedom of expression and freedom of association. Following Huntington (1991: 12), scholars have referred to this prodemocracy turn in Africa as part of the “third wave of democratization” – a global

movement for democracy which was set in motion by the fall of authoritarian regimes in Europe. Decalo (1992) for example writes:

triggered by the spectacle of the fall of titans in Bucharest and elsewhere, in 1990 a powerful backwash of demonstrations for 're-democratization flooded all corners of Africa. By 1991 the backwash was a veritable tidal wave, methodically transforming the political map of the continent.

To put it differently, an appetite for democracy had grown among citizens in Africa, as dictatorships lost credibility across the world. The national prodemocracy movements coupled with strong international pressure for democratic reform forced a majority of post-colonial regimes in Africa to introduce multiparty politics and civil liberties. By 1997 all but 4 of 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa had introduced multiparty elections (Bratton, 1999).

From a quantitative perspective, the scale of transitions, from one-party to multiparty politics, was impressive. However, from a qualitative point of view, a majority of the new African democracies left much to be desired. In most of the young democracies, incumbent governments practised massive election-rigging, intimidated or victimized the opposition, censored or harassed the press, and carried out human rights violations. Many of the African governments had in effect transformed to hybrid regimes; exhibiting some democratic features amidst dominant authoritarian traits. Researchers used different labels like "electoral authoritarianism" (Schedler, 2009: 382), "virtual democracies" (Joseph, 1998), pseudo-democracies, "incomplete" democracies (O'Donnell, 1996) and so on, to describe the new African democracies. These different labels communicated the same thing, namely that liberal democracy had been planted in Africa, but it was yet to take root. Despite, the deficiencies of the new African democracies, there were hopes for rapid consolidation of democracy on the continent, both among scholars and international development practitioners. The reasons behind such high hopes for a speedy

consolidation of democracy on the continent are best captured by two words: civil society.

1.2 CIVIL SOCIETY IN AFRICA AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Following the transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy in sub-Saharan African countries in the 1990s, scholars postulated that newly introduced civil liberties would constitute an enabling environment in which hitherto suppressed civil society organizations would blossom. Researchers argued that just as social groups such as the middle class had undermined patrimonial rule in Western European states (Woods, 1992), the nascent civil society in African states will develop and readily consolidate or deepen democracy.

Expectations regarding the civil society's role in the consolidation or deepening of democracy in Africa were basically two-fold. First, the civil society was expected to pressure the government to put in place policies and structures such as respect of human rights, press freedom laws, and independent electoral commissions that would ensure free and fair elections (representative democracy). Second, and more important, scholars argued that the civil society would advocate for participatory governance reforms – democracy beyond election of representatives.

According to Haberson (1994: 1), “multiparty elections do not by themselves produce or sustain democracy. They do not ipso facto institutionalize broad participation in political life.” Similarly, Diamond et al (1999) point out that although elections are the spine of democracy, the Schumpeterian model of representative democracy is inadequate for guaranteeing true democratic accountability. They note:

Elections – however competitive, free, and fair – are by themselves too weak to guarantee “decent” government. They are necessary but by no means a sufficient condition for keeping state power under control; protecting civil liberties; making public officials follow established rules and procedure; keeping them responsive to

citizen preferences; making them observe norms of fairness and efficiency in the appropriation and expense of public money; and deterring them from exploiting public office for private gain (ibid: 2).

Participatory democracy which engages citizens in decision-making, policy implementation and monitoring was seen as crucial for development in Africa. Scholars and development practitioners argued that pro-poor reforms were unlikely to be conceived and effectively implemented in African states, if the poor are excluded from politics. In development discourse, civil society was accorded significant responsibility for promoting participatory governance in the new democracies of Africa. Haberson (1994: 1, italics added) for example, hypothesized that civil society was the “*missing key* to sustained political reform, legitimate...governments, [and] improved governance” in Africa.

Larry Diamond (1994) provides one of the most comprehensive analyses of the potential contributions of civil society to the deepening of democracy. He highlights that the civil society could contribute to the enhancement of democracy in ten ways. First, the civil society plays a crucial role in setting limitation on state power, thereby checking the abuse of power by government. Second, associations within civil society promote citizen participation. By so doing, they build ‘skills for political engagement’ among citizens and act as supplements to political parties. Third, by promoting participation, the civil society plays an important function of ‘teaching’ people democratic values and norms such as tolerance, negotiation and compromise. Fourth, civil society organizations contribute in representing and championing the interests of minority groups that have inadequate channels of communicating their concerns to decision-makers. Fifth, a civil society that promotes or is characterized by religious, cultural and political pluralism bridges political extremities; and by encouraging dialogue and tolerance it reduces the possibilities for violent conflicts.

Sixth, civil society organizations also have a democratic function in that they can act as the training centres for activist who can subsequently play a leadership role in mobilizing people to challenge illegitimate governments. Seventh, civil society organizations can encourage voter-turnout, monitor elections, and discredit fraudulent elections. The eighth contribution of civil society to democracy is the dissemination of information regarding government activities and performance. Access to adequate information enables people to demand government accountability, and to advocate for their rights. Ninth, with greater access to information, civil society organizations contribute to equality and fairness by supporting economic reforms that benefit marginalized groups or the wider population, rather than those that will benefit an elite minority. Tenth, the civil society can support democracy by working in partnership with an elected government, thereby giving it legitimacy. Greater legitimacy – citizen recognition and acceptance of the authority of the government – facilitates governance and increases government effectiveness.

The above identified democratization potentials of civil society, drawn from the experiences of Western European countries was the reason for the high expectations and euphoria about the role of civil society in the new democracies in Africa. In scholarly descriptions, civil society soon began to sound like a panacea that will rid Africa democracies of their inadequacies. Owusu (1992) and Fatton (1995), for example, noted that civil society is crucial for democratization because powerful elites are often reluctant to carry out reforms that will diminish their powers. The emergence of participatory forms of governance was therefore seen to hinge on pressure from civil society – bottom-up pressure. An extraordinarily high proportion of donor support to Africa was directed towards civil society organizations (CSOs). This increased funding prompted a tremendous increase in the number of CSOs on the continent (Edwards and Hulme, 1996).

Diamond (1994: 5) defines civil society as “the *realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules.*” Per this definition, civil society includes a myriad of societal groups; such as, cultural and religious groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community development organizations, churches, audio-visual and print media organs, trade unions, the academia and commercial/economic organizations. Bratton (1994: 51-52) notes that civil society – the collection of non-state actors that work towards state transformation – is a term that evolved “distinctively in European historical and cultural milieu.” Civil society, he observes, is a construct: “a theoretical concept rather than an empirical one” (ibid: 57).

Although euphoria about the potential contribution of civil society to democratization in Africa remained dominant in development discourse in the 1990s, an increasing number of researchers began to question the applicability of the concept in the African context. Despite a tremendous increase in the number of CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa, hopes for the advancement of democracy and the emergence of participatory governance remained unrealized. In countries like Cameroon, the democratic process appeared not only to have stalled, but to be actually moving in reverse (Mbuagbo and Akoko, 2004). Takougang (2003: 433) observes that in Cameroon “democracy is yet to mean more than something cosmetic, an empty concept or slogan devoid of concrete meaning.” Scholars have noted that the civil society in many sub-Saharan African countries does not exercise the attributes to push for participatory governance that are mentioned above. In the case of Cameroon, for example, the civil society is seen as weak, passive, disorganized, and fragmented (Mbuagbo and Akoko, 2004; Dicklitch, 2002; Nyamnjoh, 1999).

The concept of civil society, however, remains en vogue in development discourse despite the apparent slow emergence of ‘beyond-the-ballot-box’ democracy in many African countries. Whether or not the civil society in Africa can be counted upon to

advance democracy as was the case in Western European countries remains an issue of heated scholarly debate. On one side, there are optimists who see a rosy picture in which dense associational networks act as breeding grounds for democratic norms, and spearhead advocacy for participatory governance reforms. On the other side, pessimists argue that the conceptualization of civil society as a realm of organized protest in which actors respect norms of participation or inclusion is inconsistent with the African context, where patronage, and ethnicity, and social fragmentation is the norm. Equally, Kasfir (2004: 121) argues that the normative assumptions and positive expectations associated with the civil society concept in conventional literature make it “an artefact pointing to the future of African politics, not to its present.”

Blind and uncritical optimism which ignores the African context is not useful for understanding the realistic role which civil society can play in enhancing participatory governance in Africa. Extreme pessimist arguments that highlight the shortcoming of civil society in African countries are also not very helpful, if they fail to identify how civil society can overcome these shortcomings. Civil society despite its problems can be given some credit for the ground that democracy has gained so far in sub-Saharan African countries like Cameroon. The overly pessimist view that the concept is not applicable or is unfounded in the African context is as such not justified.

According to Woods (1992) and Lewis (2002), the right question to pose is not whether there is an emerging civil society in Africa, but rather, under what circumstances a strong civil society will develop in these ailing democracies. Reiterating Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), Lewis (2002) argues that there is need to shift focus away from rhetoric, to close-up observation or micro-level analysis of specific civil society actors in Africa, and the historical, socio-economic, cultural and political processes that shaped them. Close-up observation here means focusing research attention on a specific class of actors within civil society rather than on civil society as a single category.

Civil society has theoretical value for understanding how state-society interactions influence the evolution of democracy. However, the all-embracing concept is not very useful as an analytical tool for testing hypotheses in empirical research. Foley and Edwards (1998: 17) point out that as regards civil society,

theorists willing to move beyond a mainly polemical or normative use to develop analytical tools for conceptualizing modern polities quickly become embroiled in unresolvable boundary disputes over just what constitutes civil society...at the expense of concrete investigation of the ways in which specific elements of society are shaped by, and shape in turn, the economic and political setting in which they move and breathe.

The set of attributes that defines civil society has been a heavily contested issue since the inception of the concept. Leading scholars such as Hegel, Gramsci, and Tocqueville, conceptualize the notion differently. A historical review of the different interpretations of civil society is not the purpose of this study. It would suffice here to highlight that these variations in conceptualization make civil society a fluid concept. For example, while some scholars would classify government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) as civil society, others would regard such organizations as mere extensions of the government's administrative structure. Business organizations for some scholars constitute part of civil society, meanwhile for others, these associations would fall under a separate category, namely the private sector (Foley and Edwards, 1996).

Lewis' recommendation that research should direct attention to how specific non-state actors influence democratic processes can help avoid the analysis challenges which ambiguity in the conceptualization of civil society poses. This study will focus on the relationship between associations and the deepening of democracy for three reasons. First, in political science and international development discourse, the argument that there is a positive relationship between the existence of civic associations and the robustness of democratic institutions has gained remarkable prominence. Second, the

number of civil society organizations in sub-Saharan African countries like Cameroon has risen tremendously since the 1990s; how these associations contribute in pressing for greater participation, transparency, and accountability in the state is an issue of interest. Third, the persistence of politics of exclusion, centralized governments, and a poor human rights record in Africa despite the association boom – what Mohan (2002: 125) calls “the disappointments of civil society” – begs for research attention.

1.3 RESEARCH FOCUS: THE ASSOCIATIONS-DEMOCRACY EQUATION

Following Alexis de Tocqueville, who first highlighted a relationship between the vibrancy of associations and democracy in the United States, many scholars (Putnam, 1993, 1995; Cohen and Rogers, 1992; Warren, 2000; Fung 2003) argue that a rich associational life promotes participation, trust, and cooperation that supports democracy. The associations-democracy theory has played a significant role in enhancing the expectations that the mushrooming of civil society organizations in Africa will have a positive effect on democratization processes. Paxton (2002: 254-255) observes that “current development efforts concentrate on the formation of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in the belief that, once created, such institutions will foster and maintain stable democracies.” In particular, *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam’s (1993) pioneer study on associations and democracy in Italy has stimulated much support for the associations-democracy theory.

Putnam (1993) observed great disparities in both the practice of politics and the performance of governments in twenty autonomous regions across Italy. In the regions of the North, there was a high density of cultural and recreational associations. Putnam (ibid: 101) refers to these regions as the “more civic regions.” In these regions, corruption was low, and levels of civic engagement as well as government performance were high. In contrast to the North, the regions in the South were characterized by

scantiness in local associations, hence the term, “less civic regions” (ibid: 97). Here, corruption was high, government performance was poor and politics was “marked by vertical relations of authority and dependency...embodied in patron client network” (ibid: 99).

Drawing on Coleman (1988), Putnam advanced that the differences in modes of governance and government performance between the Northern and Southern regions were due to differences in social capital. The vibrant associational life in the Northern regions created a high stock of social capital – norms of reciprocity, trust and networks of solidarity – which predisposed citizens to cooperate in pursuit of common interests. He argued that when social capital is high as was the case in the Northern regions, citizens “demand more effective public service, and they are prepared to act collectively to achieve their shared goals” (Putnam, 1993: 182). In addition, he noted that the networks of horizontal ties established by associational activity implanted egalitarian values in society, and made state-society relations more democratic.

According to Putnam (1993: 171), social capital consists of two components – “norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement” – which co-determine each other. In other words, in regions with limited associational activity, people tend to trust and depend on each other. Meanwhile, communities in which people distrust each other are often characterized by a scantiness of civic associations. Considering this, he argues that the low level of associational activity in the Southern regions of Italy was the main reason for the undemocratic nature and poor performance of governments in these parts. In his conclusion, Putnam writes: “Building social capital will not be easy, *but it is the key to making democracy work*” (ibid: 185, my italics). In other words, Putnam argues that associations are the key to establishing and sustaining successful democratic governance.

The concept of social capital on which Putnam rests the associations-democracy theory is not new. Sociologists such as Bourdieu and Coleman had used the concept to explain why some individuals in different spheres of society have more advantages than others. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is a resource which an individual derives from institutionalized relationships with others and which the individual can draw upon to gain access to goods and services or other privileges. Like Bourdieu, Coleman defines social capital in functional terms. He regards it as a component of social structures which “like other forms of capital...is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence” (Coleman 1988: 98).

Putnam’s perspective on social capital differs from that of Bourdieu and Coleman in one major way. While the two sociologists conceptualize social capital as a resource that individuals can possess and exercise, Putnam in his associations-democracy thesis regards it as a *collective good* that develops over time from the social interactions of a group of people (Schuurman, 2003). Putnam’s perspective is novel in the sense that it highlights how the sociological concept could have implications on the functioning of political systems and consequently on socio-economic development. The influence of Putnam’s perspective on international development has been far reaching. Farouk (2004) observes that the following publication of Putnam’s work, multinational organizations, notably the World Bank began giving considerable attention to research on the implications of social capital for development and on ways of building social capital in developing countries.¹ In fact, the World Bank (2001) defines social capital as a crucial factor for development: “the glue that holds societies together and without which there can be no economic growth or human well-being.”

¹ See for example, Dudwick et al (2006), Woolcock and Narayan (2005), and Grootaert, (1999).

1.4 THE RESEARCH PUZZLE

Putnam's associations-democracy theory brought social capital into the limelight of international development discourse – and behind popularity, followed scrutiny and critique. Levi (1996: 51) contests that Putnam's associations-democracy thesis is a “romanticism of both associational life, and, more generally, social capital.” The thesis, she argues, overemphasises the positive democracy attributes of social capital and overlooks its potential negative or dysfunctional side.

From the perspectives of Bourdieu and Coleman, social capital is a means that can be used for different ends: to advance equality and cooperation or to reproduce inequality and sectarianism. For example, Narayan (2002) notes that networks or solidarity among members of an association, can also act as the foundation for corruption, power monopoly, exclusion and segregation. Levi's critique on Putnam's neglect of the double face of social capital shows that the association-democracy relationship is not clear-cut. Other factors influence whether positive manifestation or negative forms of social capital develop. ‘How other factors come into play in the associations-democracy equation?’ is, therefore, a question that begs for research attention.

In line with the above critique, Tarrow (1996) argues that Putnam focuses on an ‘associations-to-democracy’ causal path and does not pay sufficient attention to how the institutional or socio-political context affects associations or social capital. In a similar vein, Paxton (2002: 260) writes: “the relationship between social capital and democracy... [is] reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.” This critique about the negligence of the effect of the institutional context on the democracy promotion potential of associations is even more salient when one looks at African countries like Cameroon.

Given the failures of the state to deliver development to the majority in Cameroon, many different kinds of community associations have emerged throughout the country in the past two decades. In these organizations local citizens cooperate to fill the development gap left by the government. The politically marginalized Northwest and West Regions (provinces) of Cameroon in particular are teeming with such associations. The democratization process in Cameroon appears to have come to a standstill (Mbaku, 2002) despite this so-called “efflorescence of...associational life” (Putnam, 1993: 91). The political system has remained quasi-presidentialist in nature; as the powers of the head of state extend into the judiciary, legislative and executive arms of the state. In addition, to high levels of bureaucratic corruption, “politics of the belly” (Bayart, 1993: 228) – the government practice of rewarding supporters with political power and financial resources while penalizing opponents – is prevalent. The observation that undemocratic governments persist in African countries like Cameroon despite the association boom brings one to ask how the institutional context of these countries shape the potential of associations to advance democratic governance.

As Forje (2006) notes, an analysis of associational life in relation to the institutional context is of paramount importance because, “it will be erroneous to impose extra Cameroonian [*or more broadly extra-African*] perceptions, prescriptions and expectations” on this evolving civil society. To adequately understand what potentials associations have for the advancement of democratic governance, analysis of the influence of the institutional context must not be limited to societal and cultural factors, but must include the role of political structures (Berman, 1997). For Foley and Edwards (1996: 47), the contribution which civil society associations can bring to the advancement of democratic governance “depends crucially on the larger political setting.” Apart from the critique on neglect of the institutional context, reviewers have identified other major weaknesses in Putnam’s argument that call for research attention.

While Putnam posits a positive relationship between social capital and government performance, he does not explicitly explain the mechanisms through which social capital produces this desirable change (Boix and Posner, 1996; Booth and Richard, 1998). In his empirical research, Putnam focuses on non-contentious associations and on the cooperative and ‘civil norms-building’ function of civil society. According to Foley and Edwards (1996), apart from their civility-enhancing functions (dubbed Civil Society I), associations can also exercise an advocacy or anti-tyranny function (dubbed Civil Society II). Civil society II represents contentious dispositions or political capital; as opposed to Civil Society I which is based on networking and collaboration – social capital. Putnam’s associations-democracy theory is silent on how social capital (Civil Society I) relates to political capital (Civil Society II).

Booth and Richard (1998: 782) argue that “in order to have political significance”, associational life “must foster attitudes and behaviours that actually influence regimes in some way.” Likewise, Farouk (2004) asserts that for associations to actually enhance democratic governance, social capital must be transformed to political capital. With regards to African countries where there are high numbers of development associations, these commentaries raise a number of puzzles. First, does the existence of a high density of civic associations mean elevated social capital, in the form of high collaboration and networking among associations? Second, does the high association density mean the existence of high political capital, or a high disposition for activism? Third and most importantly, is the level of social capital among associations in a given region correlated with the level of political capital? If not, then how is the institutional context implicated in shaping whether or not political capital in associations develops alongside social capital? Finding answers to these puzzles is the business of this study.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 Research Questions

Since its inception, the Putnam associations-democracy theory has come under fire. The persistence of autocratic forms of government in many African countries despite the rise of associations, compel scholars like Kasfir (1998: 1-2) to argue that the associations-democracy link has been exaggerated. Despite such criticisms, current international development policy and practice continue to promote the creation of associations in developing countries in the belief that this will lead to democratization effects. There is need to leave faith aside and clarify with evidence the actual role which associations in a typical African context play in pressing for democratic governance.

Warren (2004: 46) writes that “there is a very large amount of thinking and research to be done if we are really to take seriously the democracy-civil society [or association] connection.” For instance, how the institutional context affects the capacity of associations to promote democracy has been largely neglected in most research (Fung, 2003: 517). To determine the extent to which or the conditions under which the theory is applicable to sub-Saharan African countries, we must focus research attention on the influence of the institutional context.

Taking as case study the North West Region of Cameroon, which is renowned in the country for its richness in development associations, this research addresses the following main question:

1. How does the *institutional context* affect the *capacity of associations to press* for participatory democracy?
2. With what measures have development associations challenged institutional constraints and contributed in pressure for democratic governance?

1.5.2 Research Objectives

This study addresses the research questions and research puzzles highlighted above through six research objectives. The objectives fall into three categories, namely: conceptual tool, assessment and explanation objectives.

Conceptual Tool Objective:

1. Develop, through a broad review of literature, a framework that can be used for analyzing ‘the capacity of associations to pressure for democratic change’.

Assessment Objectives:

2. Measure the bottom-up pressure potential of development associations in the North West Region of Cameroon and identify which attributes of pressure are in need of enhancement.
3. Determine whether social capital among development associations correlates with political capital.
4. Determine whether the influence of the institutional context is strong or weak in the North West Region of Cameroon.

Explanation Objectives:

5. Elaborate the mechanism through which the institutional context (rules, norms, and cultural setting) constrains the capacity of associations to pressure for democracy.
6. Identify and describe those measures that have helped development associations in the case study to challenge those institutions that constrain their potentials to act as democratization agents.

1.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Objective 1, the conceptual tool objective, is exploratory in nature and therefore requires no hypotheses.

To address Objectives 2, 3, and 4 (the assessment objectives), five sets of hypotheses are advanced; with H_0 as the null hypothesis and H_a as the alternate hypothesis. In the context of this study, the null hypothesis represents the result that is predicted by theory, while the alternate hypotheses, as the name implies, represents the reverse of theoretical prediction. The hypotheses are as follows:

The level of social capital among associations in the case study:

H1₀: Social capital (cooperation and networking among associations) is high considering the high density of development associations in the NW region.

H1_a: Social capital (cooperation and networking among associations) is low despite the high density of development associations in the NW region.

The level of political capital among associations:

H2₀: The high density of associations in the NW region is associated with high levels of political capital.

H2_a: The high density of associations in the NW region is associated with low levels of political capital.

On association's capacity to pressure for democracy (bottom-up pressure):

H3₀: On average, bottom-up pressure among associations in the NW Region is high given the high density of associations.

H3_a: On average, bottom-up pressure among associations in the NW Region is low despite the high density of associations.

The relationship between social capital and political capital in associations:

H4₀: Social capital and political capital in associations are correlated (coupled).

H4_a: Social capital and political capital in associations are not correlated.

The influence of the institutional context on bottom-up pressure:

Institutionalism theorists, DiMaggio and Powell (1983), advance that organizations in a given environment become homogenous in character when they experience the same institutional pressures. Following this logic, the following hypotheses are advanced to investigate the extent to which the institutional environment – in an African case study like the NW Region of Cameroon – affects bottom-up pressure:

H5₀: The influence of the institutional context is strong; associations display similarity (homogeneity) in bottom-up pressure capacities.

H5_a: The influence of the institutional context is weak; associations display a high degree of variance in bottom-up pressure capacities.

Objectives 5 and 6 (explanation objectives) involve the *description* of causal mechanisms and effect processes. Given their descriptive orientation, addressing these research objectives does not involve the testing of hypotheses. Instead, in accordance with the grounded theory approach, causal mechanisms and effect processes are “abductively generated from robust data patterns...and justified in terms of their explanatory coherence” (Haig, 1995: 2).

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Social capital and democratic governance, the key concepts in this research are probably the most popular and most contested notions in political science and development discourse. To avoid ambiguity, it is imperative that these key terms and others stated in the research questions and research hypothesis be clearly defined.

Institutional Context:

Following Scott (2001), the institutional context in this study refers to *the collection of rules (formal and informal), established societal values or norms and cultural belief systems that structure social action in a given setting.*

Participatory governance:

Participatory democracy emerged as a critique of liberal democracy; it is as such best defined in relation to liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is a system of government in which citizens enjoy civil liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of association; and through free, fair, and transparent elections, they choose representatives who formulate laws and policies and carry out state administration on their behalf. According to critics, a liberal-type (purely representative) democracy cannot ensure that the interests of diverse segments of society, especially marginalized groups, are taken into consideration in decision-making. In this regard, liberal democracy can easily become what Tocqueville (2003: 240) calls “a tyranny of the majority.”

Radical democracy theorists advance participatory governance as a remedy for the accountability, justice, and fairness deficit of liberal democracy. Participatory democracy is generally understood as a system of governance where people do not only freely elect their representatives, but where there is also “close and regular dialogue and interaction between leaders and followers”, enabling different groups in society to contribute their voice in decision-making (Bachrach and Botwinick, 1992: 20).

Associations:

In accordance with conventional use of the term, an association in this study refers to a *voluntary-membership group in which people organize themselves for social solidarity and/or for the pursuit of some shared interests.* In *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam (1993) focuses on non-contentious secondary associations like leisure and cultural

groups. Foley and Edwards (1996) criticize Putnam for selection bias and for gross neglect of political associations that play a key role in advocacy against exclusion and authoritarianism. Such bias is avoided in this study. Since this research seeks to understand how associations can contribute to democratic governance for effective development, development associations will be the unit of analysis. Development associations will include all kinds of associations – contentious and non-contentious – that have a goal of improving access to public goods and services and of promoting the respect of human rights. The term associations will also be used interchangeably with civil society organizations (CSOs), which will include NGOs, community development organizations, and village development associations (VDAs).

Social capital:

Considering that the bone of contention of this study is the associations-democracy thesis, it makes sense to adopt the Putnam (1993) perspective on social capital. Social capital is thus defined in this study as comprising *the networks and relationships of cooperation among development associations, as well as the relationships of collaboration which these associations have with their beneficiary communities.*

Political capital:

Drawing on Booth and Richard (1998), political capital is defined as *those attitudes, political party ties and activities of associations that can enable them influence state policies or practice.* In accord, Farouk (2004: 2) notes that:

Political capital consists, in the first instance, of resources which are part of the social structure that ... actors can utilize in their interaction with the state, which in turn may influence the state in formulating policies favourable to them. Additionally, political capital refers to organizational activities or activism that promotes civic norms that support democratic governance (support for democratic liberties) and conventional political participation.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THESIS

Chapter 1 – this introductory section – has presented a brief background of the democracy movement in sub-Saharan African countries which resulted in the introduction of civil liberties in the 90s. Following this liberalization, researchers postulated that a rise in association numbers will enhance democratic governance. This chapter has reviewed Robert Putnam’s associations-democracy theory, identified research gaps in the theory, and laid down research objectives and hypotheses to contribute in filling these research gaps. The rest of this thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 will address the first research objective of the study which is to build a conceptual framework that can be used for analysing and measuring the capacity of associations to promote democratic governance. The chapter argues that for associations to effectively pressure for democracy, they must have POWER. The acronym POWER stands for the argument that association must exercise five attributes, namely: ‘*Politicize their development efforts*’; ‘*Organize and form networks*’; ‘*Work in collaboration with local communities to build grassroots ties*’; ‘*Establish link with opposition political parities*’; and ‘*Rally required resources*’.

Chapter 3, the methodology section, elaborates how the conceptual tool is operationalized in empirical data collection and analysis. This section also explains why the North West Region of Cameroon – a negative case study – is appropriate for addressing the research questions posed. The data collection methods, namely, a survey and semi-structured interviews, are described and justified; and so are the data analysis methods: correspondence analysis and process-tracing.

Chapter 4 begins with a brief presentation of the political history of Cameroon and then focuses on addressing the second, third and fourth objectives of the research. As concerns

the second research objective, this section demonstrates that despite the high density of associations in the NW Region of Cameroon, average bottom-up pressure for democracy is low. Associations in the case study region score high in social capital attributes, namely, '*Organization and networking*' (O) and '*Working in collaboration with local communities*' (W). However, associations show low scores for '*Resource capacity*' (R), as well as for political capital attributes, namely, '*Politicization activities*' (P) and '*Established links with opposition political parties*' (E). The quantitative assessment of bottom-up pressure therefore reveals that development associations in Cameroon need to focus efforts on developing their political capital and resource capacities if they hope to play a greater role in democratization.

Regarding the third research objective of the study, correspondence analysis of survey data leads to the conclusion that social capital and political are not correlated or coupled in the case study. In other words, although social capital is an important bottom-up pressure attribute, high levels of it among associations is not automatically accompanied by high levels of political capital. Given the observation that social capital and political are not coupled, Chapter 4 argues that social capital is not sufficient for democratization efforts as Putnam suggests. Without two other key elements, namely political capital and material/financial resources, social capital will not have the democratization effects that Putnam predicts. Simply put, as a contributor to democracy, social capital is weak in the absence of political capital and financial resources.

In relation to the fourth research hypothesis, Chapter 4 demonstrates with the help of correspondence analysis that the influence of the institutional context on bottom-up pressure is strong in the case study. Associations exhibit considerable homogeneity in their bottom-up pressure capacities (POWER). Considering the strong influence of the institutional context, Chapter 4 concludes that to effectively support civil society in

Africa, it is first crucial to understand the mechanisms through which the institutional context produces an effect on bottom-up pressure, the fifth objective of the research.

Chapter 5 addresses this fifth research objective. This section demonstrates that government and donor regulations, together with norms and cultural codes of conduct work to constrain political capital in development associations. The regulatory constraints include: government harassment of politically-active associations; state enforcement of a decree that forbids associations to have political objectives or political party ties; the retainment of a vague state law that permits the government to ban protests on account of preserving peace and security; and lastly, government and donor preferential funding of service-delivery associations as opposed to activist associations.

Regarding the influence of normative institutions, the fifth chapter argues that corruption and clientelism are entrenched norms that inhibit political capital in associations in the Cameroonian context. These practices are so widespread that the non-players (associations that criticize the government) tend out to be the losers. To gain access to financial resources from the state, associations are therefore forced to succumb to the corruption norm, and their opposition spirit is compromised in the process. Furthermore, in Cameroon, opposition or political rivalry is construed as enmity. This norm, which is a relic of clashes between the opposition and the ruling party during the democracy movement of the 90s, makes most associations to avoid engagement in political activities. Furthermore, being apolitical and non-partisan is a norm encouraged by the majority of development associations in the NW Region, even though apolitical equates with acquiescence to bad governance.

In addition to the above norms, politics in the Cameroonian context is construed as a profession that should be left to experts, namely political party officials. The prominence of this so-called ‘professionalization of politics’ norm limits the formation of

‘association-opposition party linkages’ that are important for democratization efforts. The above influence factors are exacerbated by a predilection for ethnicity politics. The existence of over 294 registered political parties – as many parties as ethnic groups – leaves the opposition highly fragmented. Due to this fragmentation, opposition parties do not appear to associations as credible partners with whom they can establish links and work to advance democracy.

Two cultural factors that contribute in limiting political capital in associations are highlighted in Chapter 5. The first is an enduring culture of respect or reverence of elites and chiefs. This longstanding tradition limits the degree to which civil society organizations challenge established power. Secondly, resource scarcity has bred a culture of strife and competition, rather than one of cooperation among development associations. Quantitative data shows that associations in the NW Region exhibit high social capital in the form of cooperation and networking. However, this networking remains superficial in the atmosphere of backstabbing, blackmail, and scramble over donor resources, which has developed among associations. As a result of this culture of competition, joint advocacy campaigns are uncommon even though good governance is an objective with which a large number of development associations identify.

Chapter 6 focuses on the sixth research objective: identifying those measures that have helped development associations in North West Cameroon to challenge institutions that constrain their pressure potentials. This section argues that associations are more likely to break institutional constraints to democracy when their advocacy efforts are *consistent or continuous* over a period of time, as opposed to when they are *intermittent or discontinuous*. Some of the measures that have yielded results include, the creation of microcosms of participatory democracy by involving citizens in development projects at the local level. Such participation programmes erode those norms and values that support corruption, clientelism and exclusion. Other measures worthy of note include: carrying

out revenue-generating activities to reduce reliance on donors for resource; establishing partnerships with multiple donors to reduce the risk of cooptation by one principal donor; and using the legal system to fight injustice and abuse of power.

Qualitative data also reveals that attacking the image of the government through embarrassment and shaming of corrupt government sectors forces state administrators to consider reform. In addition, using the media and other means of communication allows associations to share vital information, learn from each other, and replicate measure that have yielded positive improvements in governance. Through such information-sharing, a movement for change can grow out of disconnected association advocacy initiatives.

Chapter 7, the concluding section recapitulates the main research puzzle of the study, highlights the conceptual and theoretical contributions of the research, and proposes some practical recommendations for international donors and development associations in Africa. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the degree to which the findings can be generalized, and also points out the limitation of the study as well as issues for further research.

2

CONSTRUCTING A TOOL FOR ASSESSING BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE: THE POWER FRAMEWORK

ABSTRACT

Pressure from the bottom is crucial for driving democratic change. Without bottom-up pressure, the emergence of participatory governance will be entirely dependent on the benevolence of the powerful, who typically are unwilling to open up decision-making. Although literature abounds with case studies on how civic associations can mount pressure for democratic change, no suitable methodological tool for assessing bottom-up pressure has yet been developed. From an extensive review of literature, this chapter develops a tool – the POWER framework – for the assessment of bottom-up pressure. The POWER framework upholds that civic associations mount effective bottom-up pressure when they: (i) **P**oliticize their development efforts; (ii) **O**rganize, form networks and coalitions based on a participation ideology; (iii) **W**ork in collaboration with the community, thereby building social ties that make mobilization possible; (iv) **E**stablish strong links with pro-democracy opposition parties; and (v) **R**ally resources and capacities for advocacy and lobbying.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In international development, participatory governance has gained widespread popularity as the therapy for the failings of hierarchical systems of governance in developing countries. In fact promoting participation in development programs has almost become a gospel among western donors. This popularity is based on the premise that including the marginalized in decision-making guarantees more equality, accountability and justice in development. Given this argument, many scholars, NGOs, western donors and international organizations across the globe have joined voices in what can be termed a

‘rhetoric jihad’ for participatory governance. Changes in practice on the ground, however, have not readily followed popular calls for participatory governance.

In the last three decades, critics have increasingly noted that many participatory approaches in development have failed to achieve their empowerment goals. A number of critics concurrently point out that these failures occur because participation programs pay inadequate attention to power inequalities. Although supposed participatory schemes introduce new procedures that incorporate marginalized people, they do not necessarily grant these formerly excluded groups more power to influence policies. White (1996: 14) refers to this tendency of participatory approaches to downplay power inequalities as the “non-politics of participation.” Ferguson (1990: 21) calls it the “anti-politics machine” in development; Cleaver (1999: 599) talks of “empowerment depoliticized”; and Mosse (2001: 17) laments how “participation no longer has the radical connotation it once had.”

Depoliticization is a characteristic feature of top-down participation schemes (participation programs engineered or sponsored by the powerful). While appearing to be inclusive, these programs obscure huge power inequalities that exist between different actors. In top-down participation schemes, how much influence marginalized people have often remains entirely dependent on the good will of those who hold greater power. As many have noted, participatory governance has been slow to materialize essentially because elites hang on to power and resist genuine introduction of reforms that shift control to ordinary people (Schönwälder, 1997: 754-755; Owusu, 1992: 393; Bell and Park, 2006: 64). Counting exclusively on top-down facilitation for the emergence of participatory governance in undemocratic settings is “either naive or potentially dangerous for the poor” (Sandbrook, 1977: 412). To do so, is to entrust the promotion of participation to those who have a propensity to hold on to power.

Recognizing power egocentricity as a frequent attribute of powerful actors especially in undemocratic contexts does not imply that governing elites can never open up and introduce meaningful participatory reforms. Political elites sometimes support power devolution. For example, in an analysis of the emergence of the famous participatory budgeting scheme in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Abers (1998: 512) underlines the important role which state actors played in promoting the scheme. In far too many cases, however, while chanting participation, administrators and development agents leave established power structures intact and genuine transformations that give control to local people fail to take place. Given this observation, Cooke and Kothari (2001:8-13) describe participation as “the new tyranny” in development. By this, they see participation as an instrument that powerful actors recurrently employ to tame opposition and make legitimate their oppression of others.

This ‘neglect of power’ critique has not stopped the popularity of participatory approaches to development (Hickey and Mohan, 2005: 238). Nonetheless, it has raised consciousness on the fact that participation initiated from the top often acts like mascara that conceals entrenched power inequalities. The critique has called on advocates of participatory governance to take power seriously by recognizing the dangers of relying solely on powerful actors for the introduction of participation.

Participatory governance no doubt takes root and thrives readily where those with power create conducive conditions for civil society to operate. However, exclusive reliance on top-down facilitation overlooks that political will for the promotion of participatory governance does not simply emerge on its own accord. Without motivation, those in control would hardly relinquish power to lower levels. *Bottom-up pressure* especially in unconsolidated democracies is important for participatory reforms to go beyond cosmetic involvement of people. In the absence of pressure from the bottom, participation often ends up as ‘involvement without influence’.

True participatory governance as Fung (2003: 528) notes, often materializes from civic association demands for equality, accountability and power devolution. In other words, whether or not governments introduce participatory governance reforms in unconsolidated democracies is seen to depend on pressure from civil society organizations (CSOs). Literature is lush with case studies that examine the role of CSOs in promoting participation in diverse policy areas in different regions of the world. These case studies range from positive descriptions of how CSOs have marshaled in participatory reforms, to accounts of how the empowerment agendas of CSOs have been co-opted and depoliticized.

The wealth of literature on CSOs and participatory governance contribute bits of knowledge on what is required for civic bottom-up pressure to advance democracy. However, there is no study that combines these contributions and provides a comprehensive framework of the elements needed for effective civic association pressure for participatory governance. Since bottom-up pressure is essential for the promotion of meaningful participation, the need for a comprehensive framework that can serve for systematic analysis of civic association pressure in different contexts cannot therefore be overstressed.

Drawing on civic associations, participation, and social movement literature, this chapter develops a conceptual tool – the POWER framework – for assessing bottom-up pressure. The POWER framework takes inspiration from Lowndes et al (2006a: 281-291) who develop a framework of the factors that influence citizen participation. The POWER framework presents five factors as the essential attributes of effective bottom-up pressure. This categorization makes the framework suitable for systematic analysis and comparison of bottom-up pressure among different associations or across contexts. The POWER framework can also serve as a methodological tool for disciplined analysis of how the

institutional context may influence the growth or decline of civic association pressure for participatory governance.

The first section of the chapter defines the concept of participation and highlights how participation loses meaning when power inequalities are downplayed. Section two discusses the different forms in which power manifests, and most importantly, it reflects on how power can affect the promotion of participation. The third section argues how CSOs could mount effective bottom-up pressure for genuine participation. The section presents and explains the POWER framework – a compilation of the elements for effective civic association pressure developed from existing literature. Section four explains the methodological advantages of the framework and how it can be used for disciplined analysis of civic association pressure in diverse contexts.

2.2 PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND THE NEGLECT OF POWER

The most attractive feature of the theory of participatory democracy is the argument that participation can remedy the failings of traditional top-down management. Proponents argue that participation promotes effective, responsive, accountable, efficient and sustainable development. Apart from this argument, participation has a strong moral appeal, as it connotes people-led and people-centered development. Both aspects contribute to why nowadays, in development work, ‘everyone’ from global to local level is talking about participation. In this popularity, the concept of participation has been stretched to incorporate many things, and its meaning has become blurred (Oakley, 1991: 115; White, 1996: 7). The vagueness surrounding the use of participation makes Anderson (1999: 191) to liken participation to an empty signifying: a multi-purpose notion employed by different actors (even the nondemocratic) in pursuit of different interests.

But what in essence is participation? Like democracy, development, empowerment and similar buzzwords, the definition of participation is highly contested. Perhaps the most renowned definition is that of the World Bank, a major contributor to the participatory turn of the development discourse. The World Bank (1996: 2) defines participation in development as “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.” Participation, Stiglitz (2002: 165) corroborates, “entails open dialogue and broadly active civic engagement, and *it requires* that individuals have a voice in the decisions that affect them [my italics].”

For greater clarity, Oackley (1991: 116) differentiates between two issues embodied in the concept of participation, namely, participation as a *means* and participation as an *end*. As a means, participation denotes involvement of stakeholders to promote efficiency and effectiveness in already-set agendas over which they have no real control. Meanwhile as an end, participation means challenging the power inequalities that characterise hierarchical management, thus making formerly excluded and dependent groups free to input their priorities in development. As the World Bank definition above indicates, the devolution of decision-making authority to stakeholders should be the very essence of participation. Participation thus is fundamentally political. Without its democratization component (that is, participation as an end) which seeks to transform domination and shift greater control to less powerful actors, participation will be superficial and ‘inauthentic’ (Anderson, 1998: 575-76).

Much of the attack on participation centres on the failure of many schemes to fulfil the vital mission of making a resolute assault on power inequalities. In many schemes that claim to be participatory, powerful actors who are unwilling to give up control tend to focus on the effectiveness and efficiency objectives of participation rather than on the empowerment objectives. When power inequalities are downplayed, participation loses

its potential to transform the system of governance. For example, Quaghebeur et al (2004: 161) show that in donor-driven development, programs that focus on achieving tangible project outcomes leave hierarchic relations untouched. In this way, powerful actors only exploit participation as a 'soft' means to secure legitimacy (Mosse, 2001:27): "a means for top-down planning to be imposed from the bottom up" (Hildyard et al, 2001: 59-60).

As far back as the 18th century, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, the pioneer of participation theory recognised the importance of power balance for true participation. He emphasised that ideal participation requires equality among stakeholders, to ensure that no actor forces its goals to prevail over common interests (Pateman, 1970). Rousseau pointed out that, equality among stakeholders holds

the key to the working of the political machine [of participation]; this alone legitimises civil undertakings, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most frightful abuses (Rousseau, 2008: 27).

This prerequisite – the independence of actors – makes the emergence of participatory governance seem like an unrealistic utopian dream in political settings with hierarchic power relations. But while Rousseau in his time wrote on participation only hypothetically, today there is compelling empirical evidence that this other world which he imagined is indeed possible.

Case studies of successful empowered participatory governance (Fung and Wright, 2003) show that power structures can be transformed to bring participation close to Rousseau's utopian vision. But if power imbalances in a given context are not restructured, then participation as a democratic vision in which people jointly decide their policies and priorities becomes unrealisable. In many so-called participatory programmes in development, participation misses the whole point: initiators of participation programs fail to apply participation as a radical challenge to power inequalities and paternalistic

structures. Instead, they apply participation as a mere technical solution to societal problems (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000: 46-47).

Participation engineered or promoted by powerful actors often stresses on cooperation and consensus, rather than revolution and system overhaul. Bachrach and Botwinick (1992: 152) note that consensual politics is a favoured approach to democracy in political science, because class struggles are often considered potentially destabilising. They argue that restraining struggles against inequalities via the promotion of consensus is unhealthy for democratization. Democracy, they argue, instead benefits when bottom-up class struggles are promoted as these are crucial for counteracting domination and promoting equality (ibid: 152-53). For Mouffe (2000: 149), the aim of democratic politics should not be to eradicate passions and dissent under the guise of consensus, or harmony. Encouraging democratic contestation (“agonism”), she argues, reduces the potential for differences to degenerate into violent conflicts (“antagonism”).

True participatory governance will seldom be bestowed to a people; it is something marginalized groups themselves have to struggle for. In fact, Taylor (2001: 136) upholds that participation in development is in dire need of its neglected radical side: a “challenge from below” against relations of subordination. Similarly, Rahman (1995: 29) argues that this pressure from the bottom “is needed to influence...political or social forces towards eventual transformation.” Given the criticism levied on participation, proponents of participatory governance are now turning attention to how participation can be re-politicized. The book *‘Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation’* (Hickey and Mohan, 2004) is an example of such works. Re-politicization means viewing participation as a project whose primordial aims is to reduce asymmetries of power. It means reconceptualising participation in terms of advocacy or struggle for political accountability and authentic inclusion of the interests of marginalized groups.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are generally regarded as having the mandate to mount pressure for power devolution reforms. Understanding what is needed for CSOs to effectively exercise this role is of great value to proponents of participatory democracy. But before proceeding to discuss the elements important for CSOs to mount effective pressure for participation, it is first important to understand how domination is exercised. Contemplating how insubordination can grow and thrive will benefit from a discussion of the mechanisms through which subordination is secured in the first place. The next section reviews the concept of power with emphasis on the different mechanisms which powerful actors employ to achieve dominance.

2.3 DOMINATION AND THE DIMENSIONS OF POWER

In political science, considerable intellectual scholarship has focused on discerning the forms in which power operates. Understanding the dimensions of power sheds light on how some groups or classes manage to maintain control over others. Knowledge on how power operates provides a basis for reflecting on what counter power mechanisms marginalized groups would require to escape these domineering influences.

What is power? How is power exercised to secure domination for some over others? These questions have been heavily debated. Academic debate has yielded valuable insights on the different forms in which power works to secure domination. These different forms of power are commonly referred to as *the four dimensions of power* (Digeser, 1992: 978; Hardy, 1996: 4). It is beyond the scope of this work to exhaustively review, for its own sake, the debates on the dimensions of power that go far back in the history of political thought. Numerous works have already done justice to this aspect (see for example, Clegg, 1989; Hindess, 1996). The interest here is to reflect on what the different dimensions of power mean for CSOs and the participatory governance agenda.

The first dimension conceives power as the capacity of an individual, group or organization to make its interests prevail over those of another in a decision-making setting. According to this position, the exercise of power occurs only in situations of observable conflict, which implies that the party whose position is adopted at the end of the decision-making process is the party with more power (Dahl, 1961: 336; Polsby, 1963: 113). This view of power presumes that actors (such as CSOs) are conscious of their preferences and they pursue them resolutely in decision-making. The one-dimensional view on power thus sees disempowerment only as a subjugation of the interests of the weak in decision-making. In other words, it sees no power at work where there appears to be consensus. Therefore, by implication, it suggests that to promote participation, CSOs and marginalized groups only need to increase their representation and negotiation power in decision-making.

The second dimension of power argues that analyzing power only in terms of contention in decision-making is insufficient. Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 949) point out that power is also at work when an actor “limits decision making to relatively non-controversial matters, by influencing community values and political procedures.” They refer to this second dimension as the “non-decision making” face of power (ibid: 949), since it works to keep certain disagreements out of the political process.

This second dimension view which highlights a more covert face of power has significant implications for participatory governance. It reveals that dominant actors can forestall genuine participation just by influencing which issues come up on the agenda for stakeholder deliberation. Conscious or uncalculated agenda shaping can exclude the consideration of radical alternatives from decision making, hence it is a form of domination outside the decision-making process. By implication, CSOs seeking to promote participation must not restrict themselves to questioning who participates and who has leverage to influence decisions. They should also question on whose terms

participation is based and strive to change these terms to their benefit. Achieving participatory governance will entail that CSOs counteract those value systems and procedures which keep the issue of power devolution from getting on the agenda for deliberation.

The third dimension of power adds yet another important perspective on how one actor could achieve dominion over another. Lukes (2005: 27) asserts that in addition to the two dimensions of power, an actor also wields power over another by “influencing, shaping and determining his [or her] very wants.” This view criticizes the first two dimensions of power for making two wrong assumptions. First, that people always know what their real interests are. Second, that such consciousness is beyond the influence of power. The third dimension of power rejects the underlying assumption that power is only at work in situations of observable grievances or disagreements. In fact, it upholds that power is more effective at accomplishing domination when it breeds consensus by placating actors to accept the status quo (Lukes, 2005: 27-28; Boulding, 1990: 10). Gramsci (2006:12) calls this hegemony by consent: power that operates through acquisition of legitimacy. He argues that the acquisition of legitimacy facilitates the success of more coercive power. Ideological indoctrination is a formidable restraint against revolution since it influences the proletariat to accept current standings and practices as normal (Gramsci, 1990: 50). Domination in this case proceeds through the sustenance of those ritualistic practices, identity constructions, and relationship configurations that enlist the masses into the project of the powerful. Bourdieu (1980: 53) captures this third dimension of power in the term *habitus*. *Habitus* denotes the predisposition for people to act according to historically standardized and taken-for-granted routines without conscious reflection of underlying motives.

While the first two dimensions see power only in terms of political, economic, or material capacity, the third dimension brings out the ideological and cognitive reach of power.

This rather radical perspective clearly widens the horizon of how power could work to obstruct genuine participation. The crucial contribution of this perspective is that the powerful can effectively sustain supremacy, if they make the marginalized accomplices in their own subordination. This could be through the reinforcement of certain identities that limit the imagination of alternatives such as participation. Alternatively it could be through the promotion of perceptions that recruit marginalized people into courses of action that do not serve their real interests. By implication, in order to foster participatory governance, CSOs would need to guard their emancipation and empowerment interests against ideological colonization. This will mean framing their interests as a political vision that questions and challenges hierarchic management. It will entail developing and advocating egalitarian and democratic identities that enable marginalized people to reflect on their rights/entitlements within a given political system.

The three dimensions of power discussed above conceptualize power in ‘zero-sum’ terms (as a finite attribute) and also as a property which can be acquired or conferred. The fourth dimension of power credited to Michel Foucault’s work rejects these perspectives. Foucault (1993: 214) argues that power permeates societal relations: “it is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or a piece of wealth.” In his view, power is a relational phenomenon operating within societal processes and discourses. Power is incorporated in the very identities of actors, making them the products of power as well as the means of its operation (ibid: 214).

In comparison to the other dimensions, the fourth dimension shifts from the conceptualization of power exclusively as sovereignty or domination. Power, according to this perspective, is “a mode of action upon the action of others” (Foucault, 2000: 21). According to this view, power is embodied in the mechanisms and discourses that define the subject; as a result, it establishes particular conceptions of reality and structures the conduct of subjects. Foucault also contests the perception of power as an exclusively

negative phenomenon – a view which is dominant in the first three dimensions of power. He emphasizes that power is acceptable to those whom it targets because it does not always forbid and repress but also produces positive effects (Foucault, 2002: 120).

The *Foucaultian* view of power points out the limits of the prospect that actors like CSOs can break out of the influences of power. According to this fourth perspective, escape from power is difficult because power is not external but internal to all actors, and it is omnipresent in societal networks and discourses. As Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998: 459) point out, this means power is not a capacity or resource which actors (like CSOs) can freely manipulate. Instead, "power is embedded in the very fabric of the *system*; it constrains how we see, what we see, and how we think, in ways that limit our capacity for resistance" (ibid: 460).

Although the *system*, meaning the collection of institutions – internalized rules, norms, values, and cultural perceptions/practices – is relatively stable and resistant to change, it is not immune to change. Actors cannot escape the influences of the fourth dimension of power but they can mobilize the first three dimensions of power (resources, procedures and meaning) to effect systemic change (Hardy, 1996: 9). To put it differently, actors can use the productive or positive attributes of power to reshape (though not eliminate) the discourses that structure their relationship with others in society. Clegg and Hardy (1999:427) note that the cooperative efforts among organizations that have resulted in breakthroughs and change are owed to the productive side of power.

The different perspectives on power hold important implications for how participatory governance could be promoted from the bottom-up. To be effective, bottom-up pressure for participation should have elements that counter the different forms which subjugation could take. That is, actors like CSOs would need to mobilize the first three forms of power to transform the institutionalized societal relations and configurations that support

exclusion. These three forms of power – resource, political and social power – are intricately linked to each other (Boulding, 1990: 9). In order to bring about strategic change, all three forms need to be mobilized together and targeted so that they are mutually reinforcing (Hardy, 1996: 13).

Civic association, social movements and participation literature abound with case studies of bottom-up struggles against diverse forms of oppression. Richness of literature notwithstanding, no comprehensive conceptual framework that describes how actors like CSOs can exercise pressure for strategic change has yet been developed. Drawing on extensive literature, this paper proposes the POWER framework as the set of attributes essential for effective bottom-up pressure for participation. The next section describes the five attributes of the POWER framework and the dimensions of power that each attribute articulates for system change.

2.4 POWER: ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE

It has been argued earlier on that participatory approaches have often failed because they have been depoliticized. The development of the POWER framework draws on various arguments of how a radical spirit could be restored in ventures that aim to promote participatory governance. It also draws on literature on factors that determine success of social movements. The acronym POWER stands for the argument that development associations would mount effective pressure for participation if they:

- **Politicize their development efforts;**
- **Organize, form networks and coalitions based on a participation ideology;**
- **Work in collaboration with the community to build social ties;**
- **Establish links with opposition political parties that support participation;**
- **Rally resources and capacities for advocacy and lobbying;**

Each of these elements requires elaboration and justification regarding how they would challenge existing power structures and open up spaces for participation. Table 2.1 summarizes which of the three dimension of power each element of POWER articulates to advance pressure for participation.

Table 2.1: POWER and its Relationship to the Dimensions of Power

Bottom-up Pressure Elements	Dimension of Power Articulated		
	Power of resource (1 st Dimension)	Power of process (2 nd Dimension)	Power of ideology (3 rd Dimension)
P oliticization activities	✓	✓	✓
O rganize, form networks and coalitions	✓	✓	✓
W ork in collaboration with communities	✗	✗	✓
E stablish strong links with parties	✓	✓	✓
R ally resources	✓	✓	✗

✓: articulated ✗: not directly articulated

‘*Politicization activities*’ (P), the first attribute of bottom-up pressure, is based on the argument that CSOs are more likely to bring about change in governance when they pursue their objectives for participation as political rights-based claims. Fowler (1993: 325) asserts that “to effectively promote democratization in Africa, NGOs will need to...consciously include the issue of citizenship in their interventions.” Similarly, Hickey and Mohan (2005: 238) argue that great potential for transformation lies in the “pursuit of participation as citizenship.” They point out that pursuing participation as citizenship means imbedding demands for participation within a wide political goal that is geared towards establishing the norms and practices that recognize participation as a *right*. As Barnes (1999: 82) further elaborates, framing participation as a right means demanding: (i) the right to access certain social privileges, (ii) the right to inclusion in certain activities and (iii) the right to hold authorities accountable.

Demands for the right to certain social privileges would allow CSOs to lay claim on resources and opportunities that increase their capacities to vie for their interests (first dimension of power). Demands for the right to inclusion in certain activities particularly, decision-making forums, would afford development associations the opportunity to influence the policies that affect the lives of local communities (second dimension of power). CSO demands for the right to inclusion in decision-making champions the standpoint that citizens should have a voice in the issues that affect them. Demands for the right to hold authorities accountable would contribute in promoting the ideology that true participatory democracy requires regular downward accountability to citizens (third dimension of power).

Bachrach and Botwinick (1992: 163) also argue that struggles for participatory governance should be framed as a basic political right to equal voice in decision-making. When framed in this way,

democracy could again become an ideology of the people – an ideology that would not only stir struggle for...[these] rights, but would also provide, in the course of this struggle, an ideal basis upon which to build a majority coalition (ibid: 163).

Local problems of development and exclusion which NGOs typically concern themselves with are but symptoms of fundamental malaise of the political system. Mohan (2001: 165-66) argues that to bring about systemic change, development associations must link local development problems to a wider project of democratization. Such a politicization of development will help CSOs build a broad democratization ideology that is crucial for mobilizing a variety of actors to bring about radical systemic change.

‘Organize and form networks based on a participation ideology’ (O), the second attribute of bottom-up pressure, recognizes the importance of large scale mobilization for effective pressure. Actors at the lower levels of the power hierarchy are often too weak to challenge the established social order if they work individually. Freire (1996: 122) notes

that in many situations the ruling minority dominate the majority by promoting divisions and internal conflicts among the masses. Marginalized and impoverished communities are often team with civil society organizations, but there is usually very little networking between these CSOs (Narayan et al, 2000: 219). For CSOs to increase their bargaining power with powerful actors in the government, networking is vital. Organization and networking enables excluded groups to turn away from internal strife, and to focus their energies on the common problem of political exclusion. Effective networking for change requires both tight bonds among civic associations as well as loose cross-cutting ties with other actors who share the same goal (Putnam, 2000: 22-23; Baldassarri and Diani, 2007: 773). Networking for sustained collective action is the defining trait that enables bottom-up struggles to gain the momentum of a social movement.

Overturning the deep-seated structures which support exclusion is usually beyond the resource and knowledge capacities of any single actor. Through networking, civic associations draw on the power of numbers to bring more weight to their political demands (Perkin and Court, 2005: 16). Networking helps CSOs to mobilize different advocacy resources and skills, while promoting exchange of information (Diani, 2000: 161; Lasker and Weiss, 2003: 24). Through networking, CSOs can increase their representation and influence in decision-making (first dimensional power); and in cases of complete exclusion, networking empowers them to negotiate their interests unto the agenda (second dimensional power). Networking makes it possible for civil society organizations to develop a joint strategy for advocacy and then divide responsibilities according to competences.

An important merit of networking as an attribute of pressure is its potential to build and consolidate a common identity for advocacy. With this common identity,

organizational and individual actors involved in collective action no longer merely pursue specific goals, but come to regard themselves as elements of much larger and encompassing processes of change (Diani and Bison, 2004: 284).

Just by organizing around a strong vision for an egalitarian and participatory society, marginalized groups counter the norms and discourses that give legitimacy to exclusionary practices. Networking for change can ideologically empower local groups (third dimension of power) to imagine themselves in ways formerly unimaginable; to see possibilities where there were only impossibilities; and to question representation which before was beyond questioning. Furthermore, networking can help CSOs build confidence to challenge cultural codes, and institutionalized political practices which no association is willing to challenge on its own. In other words, networking helps to build mutual encouragement that is essential for the sustenance of bottom-up pressure.

‘Working in collaboration with communities’ (W), the third attribute of bottom-up pressure, is closely related to the second attribute. *‘Working in collaboration with communities’* (W) is important for bottom-up pressure because in order to mobilize and inspire people to struggle for participatory democracy, development associations must have strong social ties with local people. Collaborating with local communities in practice would help CSOs build trust that is important for popular mobilization. Although NGOs in the South play an important role in delivering services to marginalized groups at the local level, many of them do not practice participatory decision-making that involves the people (Vivian, 1994: 184; Narayan et al, 2000: 224). By operating as professional service providers in whose work people feel no sense of ownership, such organizations do not build norms and values for participation within local communities.

‘Working in collaboration with communities’ (W) is important for the promotion of participatory governance because participation comes by doing. As Pateman (1970: 42-43) asserts “participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate, the better able they are to do so.” When CSOs involve the grassroots in their planning and decision-making, the people become socialized in

participation norms and values. Brown (1991: 822) argues that “collective action can be launched in the absence of formal power and resources *when appropriate visions and values have been articulated* [italics added].” Working in collaboration with local communities makes it possible for CSOs to inspire such visions and values in society; and by so doing, “develop and maintain a sense of enthusiasm and anticipation” within the population (Zucker and Snow, 1981: 478).

‘*Working in collaboration with communities*’ permits CSOs to act as ‘schools of democracy’: forums where political consciousness and capacities for pressure are cultivated (Paxton, 2002: 289; Fung, 2003: 520). Moreover, through social integration with communities, CSOs can demonstrate the positive effects of participation, and thereby awaken people’s desire for broad societal change. For example, Abers (2003: 204) explains that in Porto Alegre, the ‘demonstration effect’ of small participation schemes in which the grassroots were involved encouraged replication, which led to eventual extension of the scheme to the whole city.

If civic associations, especially NGOs hope to mobilize communities for a bottom-up movement for democratic change, they themselves need to be democratic or inclusive in orientation (Hyden, 1997: 16-17). In many African countries, NGOs operate as insular professional organisations with no accountability to the grassroots or local communities. Low downward accountability on the part of associations such as NGOs affects community trust in NGOs. ‘*Working in collaboration with communities*’ is important for CSOs because it helps these associations build what Rothstein and Stolle (2003: 4) call “knowledge-based trust” with local residents. NGOs can effectively mobilize communities to join in advocacy for participatory democracy only when the grassroots trust them and identify with them.

‘Working in collaboration with communities’ fosters communication and builds an *esprit de corps* between CSOs and the grassroots. This puts CSOs in a position to counter one of the most pernicious effects of ideological (third dimensional) power, namely, political apathy. Collective behaviour explanations of social movements highlight that grievances and passions are vital for the masses to become mobilized and to advocate for their interests (Piven and Cloward; 1991: 439; Crossley, 2003: 289). According to Ost (2004: 299-30), emotions especially anger is vital for the pursuit and exercise of power, in conventional politics as well as in activism. Emotions, he explains is something which actors need to tap and channel to effect political change. Emotion is the fuel that powers contention; without it, bottom-up pressure cannot exist (Jasper, 2003: 158). Working in collaboration with communities would enable CSOs to activate popular emotions for participatory governance. NGO and grassroots linkages in some developing countries have, in this sense, helped to compensate for the weaknesses of formal political parties, thus contributing to democratic change (Clarke, 1998: 41).

‘Establish links with opposition political parties’ (E), the fourth attribute of bottom-up pressure, represents the argument that to influence government policies, CSOs need to forge alliance with actors that have political power. Through lobbying, marginalized groups can bring pressure to bear on policy-making processes from the outside. However, their chances of effecting policy change increases, if their interests are strongly represented *inside* the forums where critical decisions are made. Schönwälder (1997: 762) upholds that grassroots movements need to form alliances with political parties that support participation. He argues that although such alliances can expose the grassroots to cooptation, they are also an effective means of pressuring the political elite to actually implement participatory governance reforms. These links are also important because,

political parties...usually have less difficulty in devising and implementing political strategies and can therefore project the concerns of...popular movements into the political arena and represent them there (Ibid; 762).

In social movement research, McAdam, (1996: 27) similarly argues that political allies and access to the political system act as key “political opportunity” factors that increase the chances for advocacy to succeed.

Established links with the opposition enables CSOs to articulate the first, second and third dimensions of power to pressure for participatory governance. As these links increase representation of marginalized interests in decision-making circles, it profits bottom-up pressure through the first dimension of power. Such links also enhance the potential of CSOs to influence the agenda of the political elite so that it reflects their interests (second dimensional power). Moreover, alliances with parties that support participation could help CSOs introduce and strengthen an ideology of egalitarianism and participation in public consciousness (third dimensional power). Working together, these three mechanisms could enable CSOs to brake vicious cycles of corruption, clientelism and political apathy that sustain exclusion.

Two popular empirical cases of participatory governance elucidate how civic association links to participation-friendly parties could transform dreams of participation into reality. In Porto Alegre, Brazil, and in the Indian states of Kerala and West Bengal, participatory governance schemes emerged thanks to radical reforms that grassroots-backed parties introduced (Fung and Wright, 2003: 6-7). In the Porto Alegre case, the influence of the Workers’ Party as a promoter of democracy grew beyond the local level when it gained the support of local social movements (Koonings, 2004: 82). This implies that links with parties that support participation, could elevate grassroots pressure for democracy from the relative obscurity of the local level to the political agenda at the national level. CSOs could also use their support of opposition political parties as a bargaining chip for state responsiveness. That is, throwing support behind the opposition could motivate the government to strive towards regaining credibility by increasing responsiveness to grassroots’ demands. Establishing links with the opposition is also important because

elites in the political system can provide powerless grassroots with vital resources to sustain pressure (Jenkins, 1983: 533; Fox, 1996: 1098).

‘**Rally** resources and capacities for mounting pressure’ (R), the fifth attribute of bottom-up pressure, is drawn from the resource mobilization theory of social movements. The resource mobilization theory argues that resources are vital for the emergence of opposition against a polity, and resources are also crucial for sustained and effective activism (McCathy and Zald, 1973: 1; 1977: 1216). The resource mobilization theory maintains that even when marginalized groups hold grievances against the government, lack of resources could constrain their activism or pressure for change. As Cress and Snow (1996: 1095) note, these important resources could be *moral* (for example, solidarity); *material* (for example, finances); *informational* (for example, technical knowhow); and *human* (leadership and organizational capacity).

Without crucial resources and capacities, marginalized groups cannot effectively press through their interests even if powerful actors open up spaces for them to contribute their voice. For example, Mulder (1971: 35) shows that expert knowledge and skills for argumentation are crucial for effective participation. He argues that when marginalized groups lack these capacities, powerful actors with these competences dominate decision-making. Hailey (2001: 94) concurs that even in inclusive approaches like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), “power often lies in the hands of the most articulate and politically adept.” Mobilizing the different kinds of resources would, therefore, build the capacities of CSOs and marginalized groups to influence the political agenda (second dimension of power). Such resources would also permit grassroots to actually effect change on governmental policy (first dimensional power) when spaces open up for their participation.

Civic associations in developing countries receive substantial financial resources from foreign donors who perceive them as more capable of delivering development to the most excluded. While external funding can boost civic association advocacy activity, it can also dampen it. Edwards and Hulme (1996: 962) posit that high dependence on donor funding influences NGOs to concentrate on service delivery at the expense of advocacy. Social movement theorists also argue that resource dependence can lead to professionalization of social movement organizations and moderation of their goals (see Jenkins and Eckert, 1986: 814). A challenge for CSOs, therefore, is to gain access to the resources necessary to sustain pressure and at the same time maintain their autonomy. They are most likely to reduce the risk of being co-opted by resource providers if they diversify their resources sources (Kriesi, 1996: 155).

The POWER framework is a good lens for analyzing bottom-up pressure in different contexts because it was developed from a broad review of literature on civic pressure. Although the POWER framework provides conceptual guidance on what analysis of pressure for democracy should focus on, it should be noted that what counts as pressure could be locally specific. This implies that in addition to the five attributes of bottom-up pressures discussed above, researchers must remain open-minded in their analysis, so that they can identify any peculiar pressure strategies which are culture or context specific. Page (2005: 68), for example, describes how old women in Tombel (Cameroon) marched naked and urinated in front of the state-owned water corporation in objection to government takeover of a community water project. Following this unconventional protest practice, the workers of the state corporation fled in fear of the 'juju' which the traditional rite had casted.

Also, in *'Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Form of Peasant Resistance'*, Scott (1990: 289-293) identifies some resistance strategies among the poor in Malaysia that do not conform to conventional understandings of resistance. His ethnographic study shows

peasant resistance as (i) not organized, (ii) not revolutionary, (iii) not ideologically directed, and (iv) accepting rather than rejecting domination. His study illustrates that context-bound realities can make marginalized people to adopt resistance measures that are different from the norm. Consequently, while using the POWER framework as a conceptual tool for analyzing pressure for participatory democracy, researchers should remain aware that contexts differ and context matters.

2.5 THE POWER FRAMEWORK AS A METHODOLOGICAL TOOL

Many studies on research design emphasize that clarifying research concepts is paramount in scientific research. Chalmers (2010: 11) points out that:

before an observer can formulate and assent to an observation statement, he or she must be in possession of the appropriate conceptual framework and a knowledge of how to appropriately apply it.

Similarly, Nørgaard (2008: 4) argues that “even the most inductive analysis must determine what will be observed, [and] how it will classify with respect to what purpose.” Without a clear framework that sets boundaries on a research concept, the concept can mean anything, which puts it at risk of meaning nothing. Ambiguity is a luxury that scientific research cannot afford.

The POWER framework is useful as a methodological tool for analyzing countervailing pressure because it uses categories to clearly elaborate and delineate the phenomenon that is the focus of analysis. Appraising, not to mention, measuring power is a difficult issue. No methodological consensus has yet been reached on how to assess power, because of differences in the way researchers conceptualize power. Lukes (2005: 62-63) argues that the methodology for power analysis or appraisal cannot be divorced from the specific question or issue that is being studied. The POWER framework proposes categories for appraising power in the context of bottom-up pressure for participatory governance.

Since these categories are developed from a broad survey of social movement, civic association and participation literature, the conceptual tool is theoretically well-grounded.

Scarce time and resources would be wasted in empirical research if researchers go to the field only with (i) a research question, and (ii) the 'hope of seeing what is happening in the field'. The POWER framework saves time and resources because it gives focus to research on bottom-up pressure. Without acting as a mind-closer, the conceptual tool directs the researcher towards what to look for in the field, and on what issues interview questions should focus on. The POWER framework can be applied quantitatively, for example, by assessing how civic associations score in the different attributes of pressure. It can also be used qualitatively: for discussing how the context in which civic associations are imbedded promotes or constrains the development of the five POWER attributes. Moreover, the tool can be used in connection with process tracing, to discern how the different pressure attributes affect each other in a given context.

None of the five attributes of POWER can be accorded functional superiority in the promotion of participatory governance because they interact to support each other. Using the framework, researchers can carry out a more structured qualitative analysis of bottom-up pressure in a single case study and also compare bottom-up pressure across associations or geographic regions. The framework is a diagnostic tool that facilitates identification of which pressure attributes are high in a particular context, and which attributes development associations need to improve upon, in order to effectively promote participatory democracy.

2.6 SUMMING UP

This chapter has discussed how the notion of bottom-up pressure relates to the concept of power in political science. This discussion culminated in the development of the POWER framework that can be used (i) for quantitative measurement of bottom-up pressure and

(ii) for qualitative assessment of how institutional factors affect the pressure capacities of associations. The next chapter will describe in detail how the conceptual framework is applied in quantitative data collection, and how qualitative data is obtained. The next chapter will also describe the methodological logic that guides the interpretation of collected data.

3

METHODOLOGY

ABSTRACT

This chapter explains why a single negative case study is the appropriate methodological approach for addressing the research questions and objectives of this study. First, the chapter identifies the unit of analysis in the study, defines the research parameters and elaborates the criteria used for selecting research subjects – associations. Second, it describes how questionnaires were used in assessing bottom-up pressure quantitatively among associations in the NW Region of Cameroon, and how interviews and other methods provided rich qualitative data. Finally, the chapter describes two analytical techniques, namely correspondence analysis and causal process tracing that are used for interpreting quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In research, “the question being asked determines the appropriate research architecture, strategy, and tactics to be used – not traditions, authority...or schools of thought” (Sackett and Wennberg, 1997). Simply put, the research question must dictate the research design. To recall, the main research questions of this study are:

3. How does the *institutional context* affect the *capacity of associations to press* for participatory democracy?
4. With what measures have development associations challenged institutional constraints and contributed in pressure for democracy?

The institutional context is the main focus of the research.

The research questions focus on contextual factors, because as explained in the first chapter, the ‘civil society-to-democracy’ causal pathway does not hold true in many

African countries. To understand the extent to which the associations-democracy argument is applicable to the ‘young’ democracies of Africa, inquiry into how the institutional context affects the pressure capacities of associations is imperative. The main objective of the research questions of this study is, therefore, not theory testing but theory refinement. The appropriate methodological design for achieving this objective is a negative case study research design.

3.1.1 The Case Study

The selected case study is the Republic of Cameroon located in Central West Africa. There are a number of practical reasons for choosing Cameroon. These include: (i) familiarity with the country’s history and geography; (ii) high probability of gaining easy access to data; (iii) and fluency in the country’s most widely spoken languages. These practical advantages, however, are secondary reasons. The principal reason for selecting Cameroon as a case study is that the country is a good example of a situation in which the ‘associations-to-democracy prediction’ does not hold. Despite a dramatic increase in the number of civil society organizations in Cameroon since the 90s, democracy has not advanced as readily as anticipated.

In literature, single – especially deviant – case study designs like the one which this research applies are usually discouraged. Firstly, critics allege that in the single case study ($N = 1$), there is no variation in the independent and dependent variables. Critics argue that for this reason, single case study designs are useless in providing causal explanations. King et al (1994: 129) state: “nothing whatsoever can be learned about the causes of the dependent variable without taking into consideration other instances when the dependent variable takes on other values.” Secondly, according to Geddes (1990), the negative case study design commits one methodological error: it selects on the outcome

or dependent variable. For her, such a selection bias greatly undermines the validity of findings.

Thirdly, some research fellows argue that the single negative case study design is altogether *uninteresting* as it sets out to investigate a “non-event.” They equate ‘interesting’ with finding out why something happened and not with asking why it did not happen. For them, asking why something did not happen is a “non-question.” Fourthly, the social pressure that urges researchers to shun the single case study is strongest in the claim that generalization is not possible with such a research design. “How are you going to draw inference from just one case” is an accusation – framed as question – which one has heard all too often. These critiques are part of what Flyvbjerg (2006: 216) calls the “misunderstandings about case study research.” These misunderstandings arise for two reasons. First, the single case study method is often judged without taking into account the purpose of the research question that is addressed. Second, the single case study design is often evaluated according to the covariational logic of causal inference that guides quantitative (large-N) research designs.

Unlike large-N designs, the single case study is a ‘zoom-in’ kind of research design. Its use in this study enables in-depth analysis of the causal mechanisms through which contextual factors contribute in the failures of associations to drive democracy forward in Cameroon. As Ragin (2004: 128) notes, causal explanation is not restricted to explaining covariation. To be complete, explanation must also include a comprehensive account of causal mechanisms – how intervening factors interact to produce the observed effect. As the single case study pays attention to details, it is appropriate for answering the “how” question (Yin, 2003: 1) posed in this study. With this design, “the identification of causal mechanisms through process tracing is a stronger methodological basis for causal inference than the estimation of covariation” (Bennett and George, 1997).

Selecting research units based on the dependent variable in deed poses a validity problem for quantitative analysis. However, it does not pose a problem – rather it is an asset – for qualitative (case study) research whose aim is theory refinement through identification of causal paths. These causal mechanisms that are of interest can be more readily appreciated in cases with extreme observations of the independent or the dependent variables (George and Bennett, 2005: 31-32). Since the promulgation of the Freedom of Association Law, 20 years ago in Cameroon, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of development associations. Despite this association boom, progress in democratic practice at national and local levels has been slow. These extreme and controversial observations make Cameroon a suitable case for tracing the causal processes responsible for this enigma.

When theoretical expectations fail to materialize, asking the ‘why not’ question is more interesting, and also makes more sense. For example, in *Power and Powerlessness*, Gaventa (1982) asked why rebellion *did not* arise among oppressed people. Similarly, in this study, the negative (‘non-event’) case study research design is more suitable for understanding why the associations-democracy prediction *does not* hold in sub-Saharan African countries. Emigh (1997: 665) points out that negative methodology “emphasizes the integrity of the entire case, the historical details, and the connections between different aspects of the case.” Given this sensitivity to context, the negative case study chosen in this study is appropriate for correcting “Western bias” (ibid, 658) in the associations-democracy theory. The negative case study methodology is, therefore, ideal for the study’s purpose, which is to contribute in developing the content of theory.

According to conventional opinion, the single case study can achieve deep contextual analysis but it does not allow for generalization. This impression, however, is quite misguided (Emigh, 1997: 659; Flyvbjerg, 2006: 225). In large-N studies, covariation over a sample of cases is widely believed to be the *only* basis from which causal conjectures,

hence generalization can be made. In qualitative research, causal inference follows a different logic. In case study research, causal inference can be made by identifying “commonalities” or uniform traits between a few cases or between units within a case (Ragin, 2004: 129). In other words, congruence (or similarity) analysis of within-case units, together with process tracing is a good basis for causal inference and theory development in single case studies (George and Bennett, 2005: 181). Using existing theoretical predictions as a point of reference, these methods show how explanatory factors are causally related to observations. These causal inferences are micro level theories that can be extrapolated to other cases that have a similar context. The single case study, therefore, relies on “causal process observations” for drawing causal inference and generalizations, and not on covariation data sets (Blatter and Blume, 2008: 350).

Another reason for choosing a single case research design is that this research looks into the interaction between many – and not just two – factors. As argued earlier, ‘bottom-up pressure’, the effect-parameter in the study consists of five factors, summarized in the acronym, POWER. The cause-parameter, ‘institutional context’ also consists of a number of factors which would be elaborated later on. The classical large-N study does not often describe complex causal interactions between many factors. Thanks to its orientation toward thick description, the case study methodology is better suited for analyzing complex and conjunctive causal influences (Ragin, 2004: 136). Before elaborating further on the logic of causal inference used in the study, it is worthwhile to first of all define the unit of analysis in the case, as well as the research parameters of the study.

3.1.2 The Unit of Analysis in the Case Study

The units of analysis or the cases in the case study (Cameroon) are: ‘*development associations*’ in the North West Region. Cameroon’s richness in civil society associations

makes it especially suitable for analyzing how contextual factors influence bottom-up pressure in associations. As highlighted earlier, the rapid increase in association numbers began in Cameroon in 1990 following the promulgation of *Law No 90/053* that decriminalized association, and laid down requirements for formation of associations and unions. By 1998, Cameroon – with 98 NGOs – ranked second after Kenya in the UN database on NGOs in African countries (Sakabe et al, 2006:52). This UN data which was actually an underestimate of the actual number of NGOs in Africa at the time (ibid, 47), shows Cameroon at the leading position of the association boom. Over the years, association numbers in Cameroon have exploded. The total number of civil society organizations in the North West and South West Regions alone is estimated at 17,000 (SNV and DED, 2007).

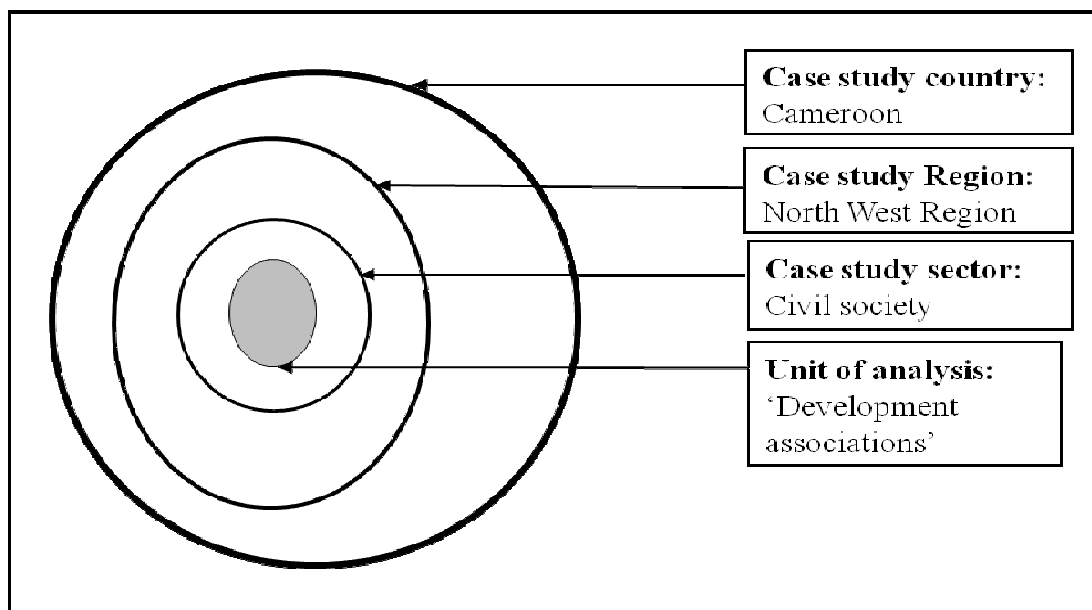
Of the ten regions (or provinces) in Cameroon, “*the North West Region is by far the pacesetter as far as vibrancy of associations is concerned*” (Interview with a former member of parliament, 2008). It is for this reason that the case study focuses on associations in the NW Region. The development-oriented associations that flourish in the NW Region act as gap-fillers wherever the state is unable, or unwilling, to ensure basic services delivery to local communities. The NW Region was also selected as a case because it is the cradle of the first opposition party, the *Social Democratic Front* (SDF), whose advocacy forced the Biya regime to introduce multiparty politics in 1990. The region’s enduring legacy as ‘an opposition hotspot’ makes it suitable for studying the relationship between the institutional context and CSO pressure for participatory democracy.

The civil society is made up of a variety of actors that “seek concessions, benefits, policy changes, relief, redress, or accountability” from the state (Diamond, 1994:6). Analyzing the civil society as a single unit will defeat the close-up observation objectives of this research. Moreover, trying to include all the different kinds of actors that make up the

civil society in analysis will definitely yield more fuzziness than clarity. Given that the theoretical interest of the study is the associations-democracy thesis, I narrow down analysis to associations, which are a subset of civil society.

As an analytical unit, ‘associations’ is also characterized by great diversity. For instance, the objectives of associations in the NW Region range from religious, economic, choral, cultural, solidarity, to promoting development. Including all these types of associations in the research design cannot be beneficial, since the research question is concerned with bottom-up pressure for democracy and equitable development. Considering the aim of the research question, the study focuses on ‘*development associations*’ as the unit of analysis. Figure 3.1 below situates the unit of analysis in the case study, Cameroon.

Fig. 3.1: The Unit of Analysis in the Case Study



‘*Development associations*’ refers to groups whose goals include broad-based societal development, rather than just private interests. This implies that associations that exist strictly for solidarity, religious or cultural reasons, and which pursue no societal development goals, were not included in the scope of the research. Associations like

common initiative groups (CIGs) that are only concerned with economic development for their registered members (and not for local communities at large) were also excluded. In total, 135 development associations in the NW Region served as within-case studies, from whom quantitative and qualitative data on the research parameters of the study was solicited.

3.2 RESEARCH PARAMETERS

A precise definition of research parameters or variables is vital for good scientific research (Nørgaard, 2008: 7). The two types of indicators on which data is collected in scientific research are generally termed the independent and dependent variables. These appellations are strongly associated with the covariation logic of causal interpretation that is dominant in political science. In other words, the term *variable* (dependent and independent) invariably connotes a research design that aims at assessing causation through an appraisal of *covariation*.

As this study seeks causal explanation through process-tracing and congruence analysis in a single case study, I avoid the use of the term variable. Instead of talking of an independent and a dependent variable, I use cause-parameter and effect-parameter. The latter terms are appropriate because they carry no implicit methodological bias. From the research question above, ‘institutional context’ is the cause parameter while ‘bottom-up pressure’ in associations is the effect-parameter. Each of them is defined in greater detail below.

3.2.1 The Cause-Parameter: ‘Institutional Context’

Institutional theory provides a basis for defining and setting boundaries on the cause-parameter, the ‘*institutional context*’. The theory of institutional isomorphism advanced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is especially useful in this regard. The theory posits that

organizations within a certain institutional context will be influenced by that environment to become homogeneous or isomorphic over time. Isomorphism, they point out is “a constraining process that forces units in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental condition (ibid: 149).”

DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 150) point out that isomorphism can come about through coercive, mimetic and normative processes. They argue that:

- Coercive isomorphism arises because of: (a) formal as well as informal regulations in the given context.
- Mimetic isomorphism depends on (b) cultural codes of conduct (taken-for-granted practices) in the given context.
- Normative isomorphism is a feature of: (c) the established values or norms in the given context.

The factors that give rise to these processes help in defining what counts as the institutional environment or context. To operationalize the institutional context in the case study, I, therefore, analyze the effects of the three factors above, namely, (a) regulations, (b) culture, and (c) norms on bottom-up pressure in associations. This characterization of the institutional context is consistent with Scott’s (2001:51) definition of institutions as comprising regulatory, cultural-cognitive and normative elements. Clearly identifying the factors of the institutional context as such gives the case study analytical focus.

According to the theory of institutional isomorphism, the degree of homogeneity among organizational units reflects the degree to which contextual factors exert influence on them. A high degree of homogeneity implies strong isomorphic forces at work (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 155). The theory of institutional isomorphism is, therefore, not only useful in defining the cause-parameter (institutional context) of the study. The

theory is also aligned with the research design's approach of drawing causal inference through similarity analysis of the units of analysis (associations) within the case study.

3.2.2 The Effect-Parameter: 'Bottom-Up Pressure'

Through a broad survey of relevant literature, chapter 2 identified five attributes that are vital for effective bottom-up pressure for participatory democracy. These attributes are summarized in the acronym, POWER. To recall, the POWER model stands for the argument that associations mount effective pressure for democracy when they:

- (i) **P**oliticize their development efforts;
- (ii) **O**rganize and form networks;
- (iii) **W**ork in collaboration with local communities;
- (iv) **E**stablish links with democracy-oriented opposition parties;
- (v) **R**ally resources necessary for advocacy.

Bottom-up pressure is operationalized in the study by collecting quantitative and qualitative data on each of the five attributes of the POWER framework. Apart from being useful in delimiting the effect-parameter (bottom-up pressure), the framework makes possible the quantitative assessment of bottom-up pressure, and also facilitates analysis of how the institutional context affects the pressure capacities of development associations.

3.3 DESIGN OF THE DATA SAMPLE

The data collection phase for this study was preceded by one-month of preliminary or pilot fieldwork. The purpose of the pilot field work carried out in September 2008 was to identify key research contacts. At this stage, a partnership for research cooperation was established with the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) – the most prominent CSO network organization in the NW Region. Given its status as a

CSO network, NWADO was a suitable point from which contacts with other associations could be made.

The research partnership with NWADO was based on mutual benefit. In the course of the field work – 1 April to the 31 July 2009 – the researcher worked as an unpaid volunteer for NWADO. As a member of the NWADO team, the researcher benefited from the organization's outreach to get in touch with associations and other informants.

Four strategies were used to identify and select associations that provided the necessary data. These strategies include (a) consultation of databases, (b) internet search, (c) random explorations and referrals and (d) attending CSO workshops. Each strategy merits elaboration.

a) Consultation of Databases

NWADO's database on active associations in the North West Region was the starting point for identifying research contacts. The NWADO database provided the telephone numbers of listed associations and this made it easy for these groups to be located. The lists of registered associations in each of the seven divisions of the NW Region were also obtained from local government administrators. Law required that all registrations (legalizations) of associations be done at the Senior Divisional Office, in the administrative headquarters of each division. The 'Association Files' available at each of the seven Divisional Offices in the region provided information on registered associations. Regrettably though, telephone numbers were available only for a handful of the many associations obtained from these government files. Consequently, only those associations with listed telephone numbers were approached for data collection. Of the 135 associations to which questionnaires were distributed, 25 were identified through consultation of databases.

b) Internet Search

The Google search engine proved useful for identifying some NW region associations. Nine of the 135 CSOs to which questionnaires were distributed were identified through internet search. Associations with online (web) visibility are often more resourced than those without. Selecting associations for data collection using internet search, therefore, had a danger of introducing bias in the research sample. The use of more random strategies for selecting associations for the data sample buffered this risk of bias.

c) Random explorations and Referrals

Eighty-three (83) associations in the data sample were identified through referrals and simply by travelling around and watching out for signboards of associations. Most of the associations identified through signposts were NGOs that have permanent offices. Arbitrarily asking people whether they knew or belonged to a development association proved effective in getting in touch with research contacts. Some informants referred to one or two associations that could be contacted and these associations in turn referred to other associations. This snowball method was especially useful in identifying village development associations (VDAs) and other CSOs that have no permanent offices or secretariats.

d) Attending CSO Workshops

Organizing training and capacity building workshops is a common practice among NGOs in the North West Region. Through these workshops which bring together representatives of associations from different divisions in the region, NGOs try to share experiences and best practices. Attending these workshops was an effective means of getting in touch with research contacts. Contact with 18 associations was made by participating in three

workshops sponsored by the European Union *Support Program for the Structuring of the Civil Society in Cameroon* (PASOC).

3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative data for this study was obtained by administering questionnaires to associations, and by going through archival records. The questionnaire was aimed at assessing how CSOs in the NW Region score in the bottom-up pressure attributes (POWER) described in the previous chapter. Archival records were examined to estimate the number of registered associations in the region.

Qualitative data was obtained through interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document reviews. The qualitative data served two goals. First, it was used to corroborate the quantitative data. Second, it provided rich descriptions/explanations of how institutions – regulations, norms and culture – influence the pressure capacities of associations. Respectively, the quantitative and qualitative data methods complemented each other, and increased validity through data triangulation. The different data collection methods are elaborated below.

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Collection Methods

a) Questionnaire

As aforementioned, the POWER framework was operationalized quantitatively in the case study using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that the five bottom-up pressure attributes could be assessed on a scale from 0 to 10. The formulation of the questionnaire was based on literature on the five POWER attributes, as well as, on the local experiences of associations in the NW Region. This ensured that the questionnaire was, on the one hand, aligned with theory and on the other hand, appropriate for empirical data collection in the given context.

Prior to the start of the field work, a draft of the questionnaire was designed, taking into account theoretical and case studies literature on each of the bottom-up pressure attributes. To adapt the questionnaire to the local context, the draft questionnaire was then discussed with members of development associations during the first two weeks of the field work. The feedback from these key informants was used to revise the questionnaire, to ensure that it captured the range of pressure activities that associations in the region were involved in. Revisions proposed by the CSO network organization, NWADO, which has in-depth knowledge on association activities in the region, was especially helpful in this regard. Thanks to the inputs from development associations in the case study, some questions in the questionnaire were reworded to avoid misinterpretation by respondents.

The questionnaire was organized into five sections, with each section corresponding to one of the elements in the POWER framework:

- i) **Politicization activities**
- ii) **Organization and networking**
- iii) **Working in collaboration with communities**
- iv) **Established links with opposition parties**
- v) **Resource capacity**

To measure '*Politicization of activities*' (P), the questionnaire assessed the extent to which associations engaged in ten specific political/advocacy activities (see Table 3.1 below). These ten markers of '*politicization activities*' (P) are adapted from the indicators of political action used in the Roper Surveys in the United States (see Putnam, 2000: 45). These indicators of political action are clearly not specific to the United States, but rather are universal; and this justifies their adoption as markers of '*politicization activities*' (P) in this study.

As table 3.1 illustrates, assessing ‘*politicization activities*’ (P) on a scale from 0-10 was achieved by assigning each of the ten political/advocacy activities a score of 1. A development association that engaged in all ten activities obtained a total score of 10, while an association that engaged in none of these activities scored 0.

Table 3.1: Measuring ‘Politicization activities’ (P) on a 0-10 Scale

Pressure Attribute	Questions	Score for a positive answer	Maximum Score possible
P oliticization activities	1. Has your association done any of the following within the last 24 months? (Yes/No)		10
	A.) Written or signed a petition directed at local or central government with the aim of achieving your organization’s development goals.	1	
	B.) Organized or participated in a public march or rally to advance its development goals.	1	
	C.) Approached or written a letter to the local or central government demanding accountability, citizen participation or citizen rights to certain facilities.	1	
	D.) Attended local council meetings or public investment budget committee meeting.	1	
	E.) Written an article or letter to a newspaper; given a press conference; or featured on television or radio to advocate for certain benefits or for democratic practice within the government.	1	
	F.) Filed a law suit to force the government to grant certain rights and benefits to some groups or communities.	1	
	G.) Participated in an initiative geared at changing <i>a law or policy</i> to benefit a group of citizens or a community	1	
	H.) Organized or participated in a campaign to pressure for transparency in elections and/or to encourage citizens to exercise their right to vote.	1	
	I.) Organized or participated in a boycott or work stoppage campaign to get the government to grant some of your demands.	1	
	J.) Supported a community member/leader or one of your members to run for public office.	1	

Measuring ‘*Organization and networking*’ (O) on a 0-10 scale was achieved by asking questions that focused on three issues. The questions were concerned with determining (i) whether associations were part of formal CSO networks, (ii) the frequency of cooperation and interaction with other associations and (iii) the quality (closeness) of the relationship with other associations. The questions used to assess ‘*Organization, networking and*

collaboration' (O) were inspired by the Integrated Questionnaire for the Measurement of Social Capital developed by Grootaert et al (2004). Table 3.2 illustrates the scoring scheme used for assessing '*organization and networking*' (O) quantitatively.

Table 3.2: Measuring 'Organization and networking' (O) on a 0-10 Scale

Pressure Attribute	Questions	Score of answer	Maximum Score possible
O rganization and networking	1. Is your association a member of a formal platform or a network of development associations?		10
	A.) No	0	
	B.) Yes	1	
	2. Does your association cooperate, share information or work with other national associations within the NW Region		
	A.) No, we cooperate with no organization	0	
	B.) Yes, occasionally	1	
	C.) Yes, frequently	2	
	3. Does your association cooperate, share information or work with other national associations outside the NW Region		
	A.) No, we cooperate with no organization	0	
	B.) Yes, occasionally	1	
	C.) Yes, frequently	2	
	4. How close is the relationship between your organisation and other development-oriented associations on average ?		
	A.) Very distant	0	
	B.) Somewhat distant	1	
	C.) Neither distant nor close	2	
	D.) Somewhat close	3	
	E.) Close	4	
	F.) Very close	5	

Measuring social integration, that is the extent to which associations '*Work in collaboration with communities*' (W) can be done in different ways. Brissette et al (2000: 56) list four techniques. These include (i) identifying the types of social relationships; (ii) assessing feelings of belonging in the community; (iii) assessing the extent of participation or engagement in activities. A fourth way (iv) combines all the three techniques above. Brissette et al (2000: 65) point out that the technique most appropriate for a particular study will depend on the study's "own theories about why social integration is salubrious." In the literature review of previous chapter, I argued that when

associations are participatory, (involve target populations) they build social ties that are crucial for mobilizing the population to pressure for change. Considering this argumentation, assessing the extent to which CSOs engage target populations in their projects is most appropriate for measuring the degree of social integration of associations in this study.

The questionnaire, therefore, operationalized the extent to which associations '*Work in collaboration with communities*' (W) by assessing the degree to which associations were *open*. Openness was assessed by asking whether associations involved project stakeholders in decision-making. The questionnaire also assessed how frequently associations invested time in building social bonds with local communities and the extent to which they were accountable to their target populations. Table 3.3 illustrates how the questionnaire was used to measure, on a 0 to 10 scale, the extent to which associations '*Work in collaboration with communities*' (W).

Table 3.3: Measuring ‘Work in collaboration with Communities’ (W) on a 0-10 Scale

Pressure Attribute	Questions	Score of answer	Maximum score possible
W ork in collaboration with communities	1. Do you involve the people in the communities where you carry out development work in the meetings of your organisation?		10
	A.) No	0	
	B.) Yes	1	
	2. Are some beneficiaries or target populations part of the executive of your organisation?		
	A.) No	0	
	B.) Yes	1	
	3. To what extent are the target populations involved in the decision-making processes of projects that your association carries out?		
	A.) Only the executive members of the organisation are involved in decision-making.	0	
	B.) The beneficiaries or target populations are consulted but are not part of decision-making.	1	
	C.) The beneficiaries or target populations play a central role in decision-making.	2	
	4. To what extent does your association <i>give an account</i> to the target populations on projects carried?		
	A.) Our accountability is only to donors.	0	
	B.) Accounts are given occasionally.	1	
	C.) Accounts are given regularly.	2	
	5. How frequently does your <i>organization</i> interact with the target populations in social, cultural and recreational activities/meetings or visit people in their homes?		
	A.) Never	0	
	B.) Occasionally	1	
	C.) Regularly	2	
	6.) How frequently does your organisation request for and respond to feedback from beneficiaries or target populations?		
	A.) Never	0	
	B.) Occasionally	1	
	C.) Regularly	2	

To measure the extent to which associations have ‘*Established links with opposition parties*’ (E), the questionnaire assessed how associations perceived their relationship with opposition political parties. It also assessed how frequently associations actually interacted with opposition parties in the pursuit of their goals. Perception is a useful indicator of the quality of links or relationships, but it is subjective. Actual interaction is a more objective indicator of linkages, but it does not provide information on the quality of

these links. Both indicators – perception of closeness and actual interactions – were therefore used in the questionnaire, in order to obtain a more balanced (realistic) assessment of the links between associations and opposition parties. Table 3.4 depicts how the questionnaire was used for measuring ‘*Established links with opposition parties*’ (E).

Table 3.4: Measuring ‘Established links with opposition parties’ (E) on a 0-10 Scale

Pressure Attribute	Questions	Score of answer	Maximum Score possible
E Established links with opposition parties	1. How often has your association approached an opposition party official (parliamentarian, mayor, etc) to push through your goals in government policy making?		10
	A.) Never	0	
	B.) Occasionally	1	
	C.) Regularly	2	
	2. How will you describe the relationship (links) that your association has with opposition parties that advocate democracy?		
	A.) None. We have no links with such political parties	0	
	B.) Weak links	1	
	C.) Fairly Strong links	2	
	D.) Strong links	3	
	3. How often has your organization written a motion of support to or voiced support for <i>an opposition</i> political party that it sees as having more democratic promise?		
	A.) Never	0	
	B.) On a few occasions	1	
	C.) On many occasions	2	
	4. How often has your organization (formally or informally) mobilized the local population to support <i>an opposition</i> party that it sees as having more promise to deliver development?		
	A.) Never	0	
	B.) On a few occasions	1	
	C.) On many occasions	2	
	5. Within the past 2 years, has your organization joined an advocacy rally or march organized by an opposition party?		
	A.) No	0	
	B.) Yes	1	

The questionnaire measured ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R) by checking how many kinds of resources that associations had regular access to. A checklist of ten types of resources

was developed from a taxonomy of resources that Cress and Snow (1996:1094-1096) argue are important for social movement organizations. Each of the ten resources was assigned a score of 1 (see table 3.5). An association that reported regular access to all ten types of resources obtained a total score of ten (10) for ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R). An association that did not report regular access to any of the resources was ascribed a score of zero (0) for ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R). The phrase ‘regular access to’ used in the questionnaire was quite subjective and ambiguous in nature. However, for lack of a better term, the phrase was used to communicate to respondents that only those resources available in satisfactory amounts should be reported.

Table 3.5: Measuring ‘Resource capacity’(R) on a 0-10 Scale

Pressure Attribute	Questions	Score for a positive answer	Maximum Score possible
Resource Capacity	1. Does your association have regular access to the following resources?		10
	A.) Working space	1	
	B.) Strong leadership	1	
	C.) Man power	1	
	D.) Financial resources	1	
	E.) Knowledge and capacity building opportunities	1	
	F.) Transportation	1	
	G.) Basic supplies (paper, computer, phone etc)	1	
	H.) Moral support (motivation) from other civil society organizations or beneficiaries	1	
	I.) Employment or financial compensation for workers	1	
	J.) Access to information	1	

In the questionnaire, equal weighting was assigned to all the indicators used to assess the respective bottom-up pressure elements. For example, all the political/advocacy activities used to assess ‘*Politicization of development*’ (P) were given the same level of importance (value of 1). Also, the various types of resources used to measure ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R) were given equal weight. One can assume that in reality, some political/advocacy activities or resources are of more importance to associations than others. However, given the difficulty of determining which indicators are more important

and to what degree, all indicators are ranked equally in this study. One limitation of the questionnaire, therefore, is that it does not rank the indicators (for example, resource types) according to degree of importance.

The questionnaire was administered fairly randomly to 135 ‘development associations’ in the North West Region. The survey was done under anonymity, to avoid a situation where concerns over information disclosure will lead to incorrect reporting of information by associations. One hundred and six (106) associations responded to the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 78.5%. Six of the 106 questionnaires received were not fully completed by the respondents, and to avoid bias, these six questionnaires were considered invalid. The remaining 100 completely-answered questionnaires were retained for analysis. Analysis of the questionnaire produced a two-way contingency table that depicted how associations in the data sample scored in each of the bottom-up pressure (POWER) attributes. How this quantitative data was analyzed is discussed later on in this chapter.

b) Archival Records Consultation

The purpose of the quantitative data gathered through consultation of archival records differed from that of the questionnaire. The goal of consulting archival records was to obtain an estimate of the number of associations registered yearly in each division of the NW Region of Cameroon. This estimate was intended to elucidate the vibrancy of associational life in the region. The archival records consulted were those from 1990 to 2008. Data on the number of registered association obtained from archival records had one shortcoming: it was incomplete. Due to poor management of archives at the Divisional Offices in the NW Region, some records on the list of registered associations were entirely missing. This shortcoming notwithstanding, the available archival data provided a good basis from which inference on the richness of associational life in the

region could be drawn. The quantitative data was complemented with observations and interviews on the vibrancy of associational life in the case study region.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection Methods

a) Interviews

In total, twenty-six interviews were conducted with resource persons in the NW Region. The informants were selected on purpose, and not randomly. Interviewees were selected based on their experience and knowledge on the research subject, and their willingness to share information. Interviewees were drawn from different groups in society: executive members of associations, ordinary members of associations, government officials, politicians who were no longer in government, opposition party officials, journalists and scholars. This diversity of resource persons made it possible for different perspectives on the same issues to be obtained and compared, thereby enhancing data reliability (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 65). Furthermore, to avoid geographic bias, at least two resource persons were selected from each of the seven divisions of the NW Region.

The interviews were of a semi-structured nature. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions that gave them space to tell their story in the way they saw it. Such open-ended questions were suitable for obtaining rich descriptions, analyses, and explanations (Blee and Taylor, 2002: 94). At the beginning of each interview, the respondent was given a brief description of the general purpose of the study. However, the exact hypotheses of the study were left out, so as to preserve the objectivity of the interviewee. All interviews were conducted face-to-face. With the permission of the respondents, the interviews were recorded, for subsequent transcription. The duration of each interview ranged from 1 to 2.5 hours. All the interviews were one-to-one interviews, with the exception of two interviews that were each conducted with a group of four respondents. The group

interviews gave the opportunity of raising discussions around some salient and controversial issues that came up in the one-to-one interviews.

A researcher's ability to establish a cooperative relationship with respondents is crucial for interview respondents to volunteer credible and sensitive information (Aita and McIlvain, 1999: 264). Working as a volunteer for NWADO, a well known CSO network organization in the NW Region helped to build researcher-interviewee trust, as members of different associations saw the researcher as one of their own. This 'semi-insider' position gave the researcher "access to answers that would have been denied a complete outsider" (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 11).

Spending a long time (4 months) in the field, and interacting frequently with informants, helped significantly to erode the scepticism and distrust that some potential informants initially had. A short 'get in-get out' research stay might have left no time for the researcher to build quality trust with informants. Some issues which the researcher explored in the late phases of the fieldwork were actually suggested by resources persons during informal lunch chats.

b) Observations

The researcher took advantage of his position as a volunteer for the CSO network organization, NWADO to gain access to training workshops and mobilization meetings of civil society organizations. Attending these CSO meetings provided direct access to insider discussions that would have been difficult to get otherwise. For ethical reasons, the researcher in these workshops or meetings always disclosed his dual position of researcher and CSO volunteer.

In the course of the field research, I attended five association workshops, four peaceful demonstration planning meetings and one of the meetings of the *North West Investment Budget Committee*. As a passive observer, I took notes as CSO members discussed issues amongst themselves; and avoided contributing my own views, in order not to influence the direction of discussions. This passive observer position ensured integrity in the data gathered.

Close observation of two peaceful demonstrations that took place in the NW Region in April and July 2009 also provided valuable information. These demonstrations were captured in pictures and videos. Data was also gathered through observations of the activities of associations. For example, interacting frequently with members of NGOs during the 4-month research period enabled the researcher to keenly observe what really goes on in these associations on a day-to-day basis. Observations therefore were important for verifying data obtained through questionnaires and interviews.

c) Focus Group Discussions

Towards the end of the fieldwork, the researcher in collaboration with the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) organized a focus group discussion to reflect on the preliminary research findings. Fourteen people took part in the focus group discussion. Half of the participants were members of the host association, NWADO, while the others were representatives of seven other associations. In other words, a total of eight CSOs were represented in the focus group discussion.

The focus group discussion which was organized in a workshop style achieved two things. Firstly, the researcher presented the preliminary quantitative findings of the research and received feedback from local CSOs who were the focus of the study. Secondly, the workshop stirred up debates around controversial and sensitive issues that

interviewees had avoided. In the focus group discussion, participants themselves volunteered recommendations on how bottom-up pressure (POWER) could be enhanced among CSOs in the NW Region. The focus group discussion was, therefore, an action-oriented research approach: research subjects were actively involved in finding solutions to the problems they faced (Small, 1995: 942). With the permission of the participants, the focus group discussions were recorded for subsequent transcription.

d) Document Review

Different kinds of documentary material on associations were consulted to complement the qualitative data obtained through other means. The diverse sources of documentary evidence served different purposes. For example, letters from associations to the government and vice-versa helped in revealing the kind of relationship between the two parties. The Constitutions of associations provided information on how CSOs were structured, and on the kind of values they espoused.

Other types of documentary evidence examined included occasional reports on the activities of associations, and NGO evaluation reports. Some of these reports provided a good history and overview of relevant issues like networking, resource capacity and conflicts between associations in the case study region. Also, consultant reports – for example the institutional diagnosis report on NWADO – gave the researcher an appraisal of some associations through the eyes of non-members.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

This study uses two within-case methods of data analysis, namely, correspondence analysis and causal process tracing, to explain how the institutional context affects bottom-up pressure. To explain natural or social phenomena, we “depend upon causation all the time (Brady, 2008: 217).” There are different logics of causal interpretation. The

appropriate methods for data analysis – hence for explanation – in a study depend on the causal interpretation perspective of the research design. Therefore, before going on to describe the two data analysis methods chosen, it is worthwhile to first of all discuss the logic or philosophy of causal interpretation adopted in this study.

3.5.1 The Logic for Drawing Causal Interpretation

What is causation and how can we establish it? This question has been a subject of tremendous scholarly debate following David Hume’s eighteenth century exposé on the topic. The simple reason for this high scholarly attention is that in causal interpretation lies the power of explanation – which is a major goal of science. Despite numerous debates on causality [which will not be reviewed here] there is still no unified philosophy for making causal inference in the social sciences (Salmon, 1998: 5).

Advocating for a unified framework for causal interpretation is similar to saying there is one methodological design that can fit all kinds of inquiry. For example, John Gerring (2005) proposes a unified framework for causal analysis in the social science. In his framework, Gerring (ibid: 187-8) insists that “empirical evidence of causal relationships is covariational in nature.” He subjugates all data analysis methods, including within-case process tracing to the covariation way of thinking about causation (ibid: 188-9). In most accounts of causation, covariation is the dominant philosophy; and it is often *mistakenly advanced as the only*. The principle of causal homogeneity that is suitable for drawing causal inference in ‘no-variance’ (single case study) research designs is often relegated.

Cartwright (2004: 805) points out that it is wrong to think of causation as “a single, monolithic concept.” She notes:

there are untold numbers of causal laws, each most directly represented using thick causal concepts, each with its own peculiar truth makers, and there is no single truth maker that they all share (ibid: 817).

In other words, contrary to popular claims, covariation is not a *sine qua non* for causal interpretation. While covariation is desirable for comparative and large-N (multiple-case) research designs, it is not universal to all research designs. In single case studies (“no-variance” designs) with within-case units, causal homogeneity provides a strong basis for analysis and explanation (Munck, 2004: 110). The data analysis methods used in this study apply causal homogeneity as the logic for interpretation and explanation.

In causal homogeneity, the logic for causal inference is similarity or correspondence among units. That is, causation is confirmed when research subjects under the same general cause-parameter, exhibit ‘similar’ values of the effect-parameter (Collier et al, 2004: 29). This perspective on causal interpretation is especially useful in single case studies, because in such studies, the cause-parameter does not vary; hence its influence on within-case units can be analyzed quantitatively and/or qualitatively by watching out for sameness. Two types of homogeneity are identified in literature, namely strong and weak homogeneity (ibid: 29). In strong, often termed ‘unit homogeneity’, the research units are expected to have exactly the same values of the effect-parameter when the cause-parameter is not varied. In weak homogeneity, causal claims can still be made when a majority but not all units show similarity in the effect-parameter.

Collier et al (2004: 29) recommend weak homogeneity for social sciences, since it is highly improbable that strong homogeneity can hold there. Strong homogeneity as employed in natural science experiments involves the control or elimination of all unwanted influences on research subjects. Strong homogeneity also assumes that observations can be measured with high precision. In social science research, it is clearly not possible to control for all factors in a case study. Moreover in social science research, assessment tools (for example, the POWER framework in this case) only allow for rough estimation and not precise measurement of societal phenomena. It therefore makes more sense to use weak homogeneity as the basis for causal interpretation in this research.

Using weak homogeneity to investigate how the institutional context influences bottom-up pressure in associations therefore rests on two premises:

1. The institutional context (the cause parameter) is assumed to be *more or less the same* across associations in the NW region.
2. The institutional context has a high causal influence if *a majority of associations are similar* in bottom-up pressure capacity (the effect-parameter).

Weak homogeneity therefore does not think of causality as being deterministic – a necessary and sufficient condition. As Sekhon (2008: 272) notes, “the hunt for necessary and sufficient causes is generally misplaced in the social sciences given the lack of unit homogeneity.” Weak homogeneity is based on the probabilistic notion that a cause increases the likelihood of the outcome, but does not necessarily determine it. This study measures the influence of the institutional context on associations by assessing homogeneity among CSOs through correspondence analysis. Meanwhile, explanations are drawn from qualitative data through process tracing.

3.5.2 Correspondence Analysis

Correspondence analysis is a statistical technique that displays categorical data (such as the questionnaire data in this study) on a single graph, thus revealing the interrelationships between the different data entities. There are a number of software programs that can be used for correspondence analysis. In this study, the XLSTAT program was used because it is uncomplicated and user-friendly. The XLSTAT program produced:

- A correspondence analysis graph showing the degree of homogeneity among CSOs in the NW Region of Cameroon; and
- A biplot showing the correlations between the bottom-up pressure attributes (POWER).

A biplot is a representation of two or more parameters – in this case the five bottom-up pressure elements – in the same graphical space. The analytical strength of the biplot is that it shows the correlations between the different parameters. Unlike other statistical methods such as regression analysis, correspondence analysis is not a technique for investigating one-way linear correlations. The correspondence analysis biplot is unique in that it maps parameters within a given category relative to one-another through two-way association (Greenacre, 1994: 8; Malhotra et al, 2005: 287). Given this, Bourdieu strongly recommends correspondence analysis for analysing interactions in social sciences. He notes that correspondence analysis “is a technique which ‘thinks’ in terms of relation” and this “philosophy corresponds exactly to ... the reality of the social world” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96). For him,

the structural causality of a network of factors is quite irreducible to the cumulated effects of the set of linear relations, of...the different factors, taken one by one (Bourdieu, 1984: 107).

Correspondence analysis makes a “break with *linear thinking*” (ibid: 107), which dominates the covariation logic of data analysis.

3.5.3 Process Tracing

Process tracing involves tracking explanatory narratives in interview data to reveal the underlying mechanisms that link cause and effect parameters. Process tracing is a strong technique for causal inference and explanation because it reveals the pathways through which different observations interact to produce an effect. The strength of the method, Hall (2006: 27) notes, “rests on the multiplicity of observations” within a single case. Salmon (1998: 15) concurs that to draw causal inference, “it would suffice to observe one case in which the cause, the effect, and the causal relations were present.” Process tracing is concerned with the series or chain of events that link causes to effects.

Variable-oriented research designs tend to oversimplify the interactions between many factors into X-Y relationships. Such oversimplification sometimes “distort reality beyond reasonable limits” (Hall, 2006: 26). Process tracing is more appropriate for analyzing the influence of institutions – regulations, norms, and culture – in this study because the method is sensitive to complexity and pays attention to context. As Maxwell (2004: 9) highlights, process tracing has “distinct advantages of identifying the influence of contextual factors that can’t be statistically or experimentally controlled.”

I use process tracing to check whether there are causal mechanisms linking any two entities that the correspondence analysis biplot shows as being related. In this way, process tracing helps one to “avoid mistaking a spurious correlation for a causal association” (Mahoney, 2000: 412). Two techniques are used for process tracing, namely, process verification and process induction (Bennett and George, 1997). The process verification approach is theory inclined: it checks whether institutional context factors in the case study lead to effects through the (coercive, mimetic or normative) mechanisms advanced in the theory of institutional isomorphism. Process induction is a more grounded-approach. It traces causal mechanisms by systematically identifying, grouping and comparing interviewee comments on particular issues, to reach cumulative explanations.

3.6 SUMMING UP

This chapter has discussed why a single negative case study research design is appropriate for addressing the research questions of this study. How quantitative and qualitative data was collected in the case study has also been elaborated. Furthermore, the chapter has underlined that similarity rather than covariation is the logic for drawing causal inference on how the institutional context influences bottom-up pressure for democracy. Two data analysis techniques – correspondence analysis and process tracing

– consistent with this logic of causal interpretation have been described. The next chapter will examine what quantitative (questionnaire) data tell us about bottom-up pressure among associations in the North West Region of Cameroon.

4

CASE STUDY: ASSOCIATIONS AND BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE IN NORTH WEST CAMEROON

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the evolution of the political system in Cameroon from independence to present day. The historical analysis underlines that following the introduction of multiparty politics in the 1990, significant democratic change has not taken place despite a tremendous increase in number of development associations in the country. Quantitative analysis shows that, overall, association pressure for democracy is low. Associations in the case study, the NW region show relatively high levels of social capital in the form of inter-association networking and social integration with communities. Despite this high social capital, these associations do not exhibit high political capital that can advance democracy. This section posits that this disassociation or disjoint between levels of social and political capital is due to the strong influence of institutional context factors, which moderate the development of political capacities in associations. The existence of high levels of social capital does not, therefore, guarantee that associations would engage in political actions and alliances that support democratization.

4.1 CAMEROON: A HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Cameroon, located in Central West Africa, has a population of about 18.8 million (CIA World Factbook, 2009), with English and French as the official languages. This bilingualism is a heritage of British colonial rule in one part of the country and French colonial rule in the other. Following independence, this double linguistic and cultural identity heritage greatly influenced politics in the country and it continues to do so today.

To contextualize bottom-up pressure in the current political landscape of the case study, presenting the political history of Cameroon is imperative. First, an account of how the Anglophone and Francophone identities emerged is essential. Second, a description of how this dual heritage has influenced struggles for democratization in the country is indispensable.

Initially, Cameroon was colonized by Germany in 1884. When Germany lost the First World War in 1918, its colonies were appropriated by the victors as part of the punishments for the war. The League of Nations, in 1922, divided Cameroon between France and Britain, to be governed as trust territories. France took control of four-fifth of the territory in the east, while Britain took the remaining fifth of the territory in the west, adjacent to its other colony, Nigeria. After the Second World War, a movement for independence or the end of colonialism began in Africa. Officially, French-speaking East Cameroon, gained independence from France in 1960 and became known as the Republic of Cameroon under the leadership of President Ahmadou Ahidjo. Like all other post-independence sub-Saharan African countries, the Republic of Cameroon was a dictatorship with the Cameroon National Union (CNU) as the only legally recognized party.

In 1961, the United Nations in consultation with Britain presented English-speaking West Cameroon with the choice of either joining neighbouring Nigeria or reuniting with French-speaking Cameroon. A plebiscite was organized and the northern part of English-speaking Cameroon opted to become part of neighbouring Nigeria. The southern half of English-speaking Cameroon – then referred to as Southern Cameroon – voted to reunite with French-speaking Cameroon to form a federal state. Before the plebiscite Southern Cameroonians had been struggling for autonomy from Nigeria. In the plebiscite, “they overwhelmingly voted to join Cameroon Republic...in the belief that they were reuniting with ‘their brothers’ from whom they had been separated by colonialism” (Awasom,

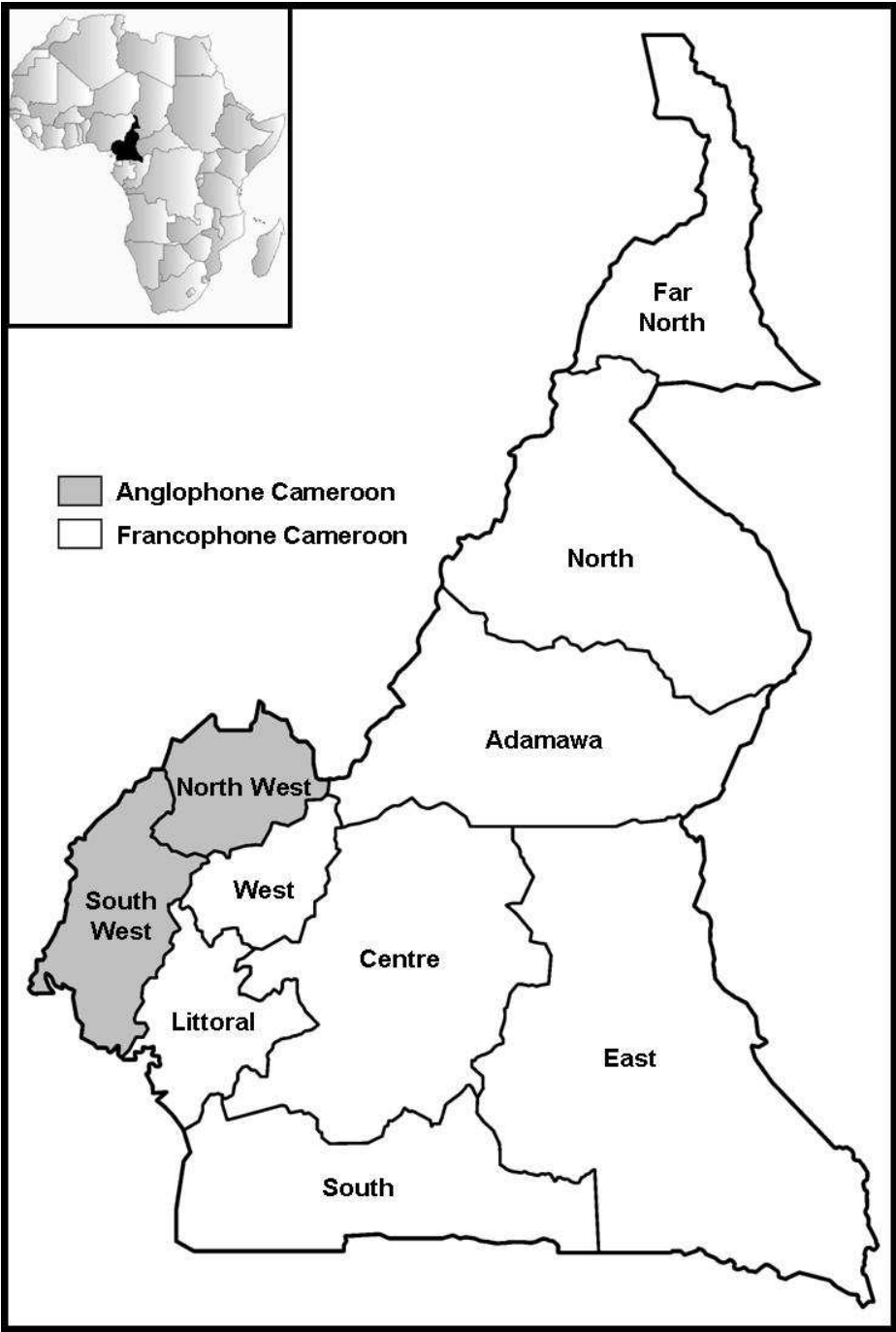
2008: 52). The union state of the two Cameroons was known as the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroon was small relative to French-speaking Republic of Cameroon; and this minority status, as well as, concerns over autonomy motivated Southern Cameroon to opt for federalism. Anglophone Cameroon believed that federalism would ensure equality in administrative powers between the two Cameroons and by so doing, guarantee the preservation of its Anglophone identity. Contrary to such aspirations, federalism turned out to be a debut in the annexation and subsequently, marginalization of Anglophone Cameroon by the majority Francophone Cameroon (Jua and Konings, 2004)

In a congress held in July 1961 to negotiate the Constitution of the new federal state, Francophone Cameroon succeeded in pressing for adoption of a highly centralized federal system. The federal state was to have two Prime Ministers – one from each state - under the leadership of President Ahmadou Ahidjo of Francophone Cameroon. Following the formation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, President Ahmadou Ahidjo embarked on an agenda to transform the federation into a single unitary state. In complete disregard of the federal agreement, he carved out the entire Federal Republic into six administrative regions, identifying Anglophone Cameroon as the West Region. The Federal Inspector put in charge of Anglophone Cameroon (now West Region) was given administrative powers that surpassed those of the Anglophone Prime Minister. In name, Anglophone Cameroon was one of the parties of a two-state federation, but administratively, it was merely one of the regions within Francophone Cameroon – the Republic of Cameroon (Awasom, 2008).

The nominal federalism came to an end in May 1972 when President Ahidjo's proposal for formation of a unitary state was endorsed in a nation-wide referendum. Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) argue that the dictatorial nature of Ahidjo's regime explains why

Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly for the transformation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon to the United Republic of Cameroon.

Fig. 4.1: Political Map of Cameroon



Shortly, after the transition to a unitary state, President Ahidjo divided the country into ten provinces, principally along ethnic lines. With knowledge that there were tensions between the southerly coastal and the northerly grass field people of Anglophone Cameroon, he divided the erstwhile West province (Southern Cameroon) into two: the South West and North West provinces (see Fig. 4.1).

In the unitary state, marginalization of the Anglophone minority in political decision-making and economic development intensified (Awasom, 2008; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The Anglophones were reserved subordinate positions in state institutions and were treated as imperfect citizens who needed to adapt to the French language. Although dissent simmered among Anglophone Cameroonians, internal divisions and the dictatorial nature of the Ahidjo regime prevented the emergence of an opposition movement. In Ahidjo's one-party regime, the Law of June 1967 on Associations banned all grouping that in any way "threatened the form of government" (Jua, 2002: 5).

The United Republic of Cameroon had a regime change in 1982, when President Ahmadou Ahidjo for yet unclear reasons resigned from power. As the Constitution required, his Prime Minister, Paul Biya took over as head of state. One year after the power transfer, a conflict developed between Paul Biya and Ahidjo, forcing the former president into self-exile. In absentia, the Biya government judged and sentenced Ahmadou Ahidjo to death. In 1984, soldiers loyal to Ahidjo tried unsuccessfully to overthrow the Biya regime through a coup. Paul Biya responded to the failed coup with a bloody repression of Ahidjo supporters. Upon his rise to power, Paul Biya had pledged to introduce democratic reforms based on an ideology of decentralization and grassroots participation which he subsequently published in his book '*Communal Liberalism*'. However, after the failed coup, Biya's so-called 'New Deal Government' reinforced

authoritarianism (Dicklitch, 2002). In practice, the Biya regime was essentially a copycat of the preceding dictatorial regime, albeit with enhanced tribalism and corruption.

To the disappointment of English-speaking Cameroonians, President Biya also changed the country's name from United Republic to simply the Republic of Cameroon – which is what Francophone Cameroon was called when it gained independence from France. The last relic which indicated that Cameroon was a union state was thus dropped. President Biya appointed officials from his ethnic group and from other parts of Francophone Cameroon to leadership positions in almost all sectors of state administration. Marginalization of the Anglophones, however, was not only political. Programs on the state television were almost exclusively run in French. Also, even though Cameroon was a bilingual country, English was in day-to-day practice, not accepted as a means of communication in government ministries, which considering the centralized form of administration were headquartered in the capital city, Yaounde, situated in the French part of the country. Anglophone Cameroonians, therefore, felt like second-class citizens who had to adapt in a Francophone state. All the above, coupled with government marginalization of the North West and South West provinces with regards to development, fuelled bitterness among the Anglophones; thus intensifying the Anglophone-Francophone identity divide.

The antagonism between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon manifested in the form of insults in everyday life. The French-speakers referred to the Anglophones as '*Anglo-fous*' ('*fous*' being the French equivalent for fools); while the English-speakers addressed their French counterparts simply as '*frogs*'. The regime also deepened the North Westerners versus South Westerners cleavage that existed among Anglophone Cameroonians. The people of the two regions were encouraged to see themselves as rivals, who competed for those positions that the French-dominated government discretionarily reserved for English-speakers. The Biya regime plunged Cameroon into

economic decline and widespread corruption; but through repression and a masterly use of the art of divide-and rule, Biya subdued opposition to his regime (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2004; Mbuagbo and Akoko, 2004).

Upon his rise to power, Biya changed the name of the country's only political party from the *Cameroon National Union* (CNU) to the *Cameroon People's Democratic Movement* (CPDM). By this name change Biya intended to show how different his regime was from his predecessor's dictatorial regime. He subsequently demonstrated his philosophy of democracy by organizing presidential elections in 1984 and 1988, in which the CPDM was the only party and he, the only candidate. Naturally, he won both times, with 99.98 and 98.75 percent respectively (Hudgens and Trillo, 2003). The first significant opposition against the Biya regime gained momentum in 1990.

Faced with continuous socio-economic, cultural and political marginalization, and inspired by the democracy movement that was sweeping across Africa, Anglophone Cameroonians increasingly defied repression to express their discontent. Despite government prohibition, on 26 May 1990, the first opposition party, the *Social Democratic Front* (SDF) was launched at a mammoth rally in Bamenda, the capital of the North West Province. In his rally speech, the charismatic SDF leader, Ni John Fru Ndi declared his party's vision:

Democracy has never been handed down to a people on a platter of gold . . . We have set as one of our goals, to rid the Cameroonian society of a system that deprives people from being free men...We call upon you to stand up and be counted amongst those who share our democratic ideal. (quoted in Konings, 2004: 291)

The government repression that followed this launching left six people dead; these were the May 26th martyrs. With the launching of the SDF, the North West Region made its first mark in history as the hotbed of rebellion in Cameroon.

Following the launch of the SDF, the party's popularity spread throughout the country. Apart from the capital cities of the North West and South West provinces (Anglophone provinces), the party's strongholds included the capitals of three Francophone provinces, namely, the Centre, Littoral and West provinces. Given increasing domestic unrests and international pressures, President Paul Biya reluctantly promulgated a number of laws in December 1990, granting greater political liberties. The 1990 Liberty Laws included the right to form associations, freedom of the media, and the right to form political parties. Despite the promulgation of these laws the Biya regime was, in practice, nowhere close to making a commitment to democracy.

The long suppressed civil society in Cameroon seized the opportunity of the liberty laws to spring into activity. Student groups, teacher unions, churches, media and cultural associations mobilized with unprecedented vitality to clamour for democratic change (Nkwi, 2006). By the end of 1991, over seventy political parties had already been formed (Gros, 1995), and among these, the *Social Democratic Front* (SDF) remained the most popular. Given his charisma, his people-oriented leadership and his appealing 'Power to the People' slogan, Ni John Fru Ndi, the SDF party chairman successfully brought the masses to identify with his vision for democratic change (Konings, 2004). The SDF, popularly nicknamed "*Suffer Don Finish*" (meaning, suffering is at an end, in local Pidgin English) was at the pinnacle of the democracy movement in Cameroon.

The opposition parties in 1991 formed a coalition called the *National Coordination Committee of Opposition Parties* (NCCOP), in which over 20 parties were registered (Hudgens and Trillo, 2003). Apart from the dominant SDF party, there were two other relatively popular parties in the coalition, namely, the *National Union for Democracy and Progress* (UNDP) and the *Union of the People of Cameroon* (UPC). The UNDP was popular among the Islamic people who dominated the Northern provinces. The UPC had support among the Bamileke and Bassa people of the West and South provinces

respectively. The coalition of opposition parties (NCCOP) asked President Biya to organize a sovereign national conference; a forum in which the opposition and the ruling party would define and delimit the powers of each of the arms of state administration. President Biya refused categorically to hold a national conference. Following this refusal, the opposition parties launched a widespread civil disobedience campaign dubbed '*Operation ghost town*' to force the regime into compliance. As the name suggests, the ghost town campaign was intended to cripple economic and administrative activities in the cities. Citizens boycotted work, kept businesses closed, refused to pay taxes, obstructed transportation and organized frequent rallies and street protests.

Apart from Bamenda in the North West Province which was the epicenter of the protests, Douala, and Bafoussam, the capital cities of the Littoral and West provinces respectively, were also hot beds of revolt. The government responded to the civic unrest with repression; opposition party members or supporters were arrested and over 200 people were killed (Eboussi-Boulaga, 1997) in the campaign that lasted for close to five months. At the time, the days of the Biya regime appeared numbered, considering the popularity of the pro-democracy movement and the alliance between opposition parties. In October 1991, the debilitating economic impacts of the ghost town campaign forced the government to call the opposition parties for talks.

Instead of yielding to the coalition's request for a sovereign national conference, President Biya organized a summit on constitutional reform and elections. A majority of the opposition parties compromised their position and signed a declaration to call off the ghost town protests if elections were organized the following year. In November 1991, 40 of the 47 registered opposition parties signed the declaration to call off the ghost town protests (Krieger, 1994). Among these parties were the UNDP and the UPC. The *Social Democratic Front* (SDF) insisted on the sovereign national conference, refused to sign the declaration and boycotted the legislative elections organized in March of the

following year. This marked the beginning of a fragmentation of the opposition; most opposition parties preferred to grab a piece of the national cake instead of pursuing regime change (Gros, 1995). In the legislative elections, the ruling CPDM party won 88 of 180 seats in parliament; and the rest were distributed among the UPC, the UNDP and a third party, the *Movement for the Defence of the Republic* (MDR). The ruling party exploited the division of the opposition and secured a parliamentary majority by forging an alliance with the MDR which had obtained 6 seats. With this parliamentary majority, the Biya regime narrowly escaped a downfall.

In presidential elections organized in October 1992, fragmentation of the opposition dashed the promising chance for regime change in Cameroon. The leaders of all the major opposition parties aspired for power, and “they were unable to agree on a single candidate to run against Biya” (Takougang, 2003: 430). The Biya regime ignored the pledge of electoral reform that it had made to the opposition parties in order to end the ghost town protests. The Ministry of Territorial Administration which was essentially an institution of pro-CPDM state officials was put in charge of election organization. The Biya regime, given its control over the electoral process, rigged the votes and robbed the SDF of victory (Gros, 1995; Konings, 1996).

According to official results, Paul Biya won the elections with 39 percent of the votes, while Fru Ndi of the SDF obtained 35 percent and Bello Bouba of the UNDP followed with 19 percent (Eyoh, 1998). The proclamation of the results sparked protests notably in the SDF stronghold, Bamenda, capital of the North West Province. True to its autocratic nature, the Biya regime clamped down on the demonstrations. The SDF Chairman was placed under house arrest, and a three months state of emergency was imposed on Bamenda. The North West region had proven itself again as the ‘capital’ of rebellion in the country.

The United States and Germany declared the election results fraudulent and suspended their aid to the Biya regime (Dicklitch, 2002). France on the other hand continued to give support to the regime. To France, President Biya “appeared to be more likely to safeguard French interests in Cameroon than the Anglophone” SDF Chairman, Ni John Fru Ndi (Konings, 1996: 261). In the elections, Fru Ndi had won approximately 68 percent of the votes in two Francophone regions, namely, the West and Littoral provinces. In other words, with its campaign for democracy, the SDF had managed to bridge the historical Anglophone-Francophone divide (Krieger, 1994) which the Biya regime had fomented. This achievement on the part of the SDF, as well as the Law on the Freedom of Association that had been recently passed, seemed to hold much promise for a growth of the civil society democracy movement in the country. This promise, however, did not materialize: the year 1992 was the farthest the opposition and the Cameroonian civil society will get to ousting the autocratic Biya regime.

Using cooptation, intimidation of the opposition, and fraud, the Biya regime in subsequent elections reclaimed the control that it had lost in the 1992 elections. By offering ministerial positions to opposition party officials, Paul Biya co-opted the UNDP and a faction of the UPC into a so-called government of national unity (Konings, 1996). In 1996, Cameroon revised its single-party state Constitution of 1972 to accommodate the multiparty system. The new Constitution set the length of a presidential term at seven years, and stipulated that after serving two terms in office, a president would not be eligible to stand election for another term.

In 1997, the first presidential election under the new Constitution was organized. Remarkably, Biya obtained 92.57 percent of the votes. This percentage was more than double what he obtained five years earlier. According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2000: 9) this election result was reminiscent of the single party era, when Biya typically obtained 99 percent of the votes. For them, Biya’s so-called crushing victory in the 1997

Presidential elections was the work of a “post-elections rigging machinery” that his regime had perfected (ibid: 9). In the subsequent presidential election held in 2004, voter participation was low. Given the Biya regime’s reputation for election rigging, citizens no longer believed that voting could lead to democratic change in Cameroon. According to official records, Biya prevailed in the 2004 presidential elections with approximately 71 percent of the votes, while the SDF Chairman obtained approximately 17.4 percent.

Despite the election rigging tradition of the Biya regime, the opposition continued to nurse hopes of regime change because, according to the Constitution, Biya was not eligible for re-election in 2011 as he would have served two terms in office. The Constitution, however, stipulated that a revision of the law could be carried out through a simple majority vote in the parliament. Since its near demise in 1992, the ruling CPDM party had progressed considerably in its control of the parliament. The party had gone from controlling 88 out of 180 parliamentary seats in 1992, to winning 153 in the 2007 legislative elections. It was therefore not surprising that in his end of year speech of 31 December 2007, Paul Biya expressed his intentions to scrap presidential term limits from the Constitution. In his end of year speech to the nation, President Biya claimed that he was responding to calls for a revision of the Constitution from a majority of the Cameroonian citizenry.

Following Biya’s proclamation, the SDF and civil society activist began organizing press conferences and demonstrations, notably in Douala – in the Littoral Region – to discredit the President’s claim. In contradiction to the liberty laws, the Governor of the Littoral province signed a decree forbidding all meetings, marches and demonstrations in the public domain. In addition, the government shut down two private media that aired programs in which the planned amendment of the constitution was criticized.

On February 25, 2008 civilians, notably in the southern part of the country, took advantage of a nation-wide passive strike organized by the *Union of Transporters* to express their grievances against the government. The main grievances expressed included the impending constitutional amendment and high costs of living. The anti-government protests which started in Douala (the Littoral Region) spread to 32 cities in five of the nation's ten Regions; the town of Bamenda in the North West Region was one of these protest hotspots. As in the ghost town protests of the early 90s, all normal activities in the affected cities were disrupted. Demonstrators grounded transportation services, destroyed government buildings, private businesses and petrol stations, and barricaded streets. And like in the early 90s, the Biya regime responded to the civic unrest with ruthless repression. The regime's repression brought the protests to an end on February 29, 2008. According to the government's official statement, 40 people died in the protest and 1,671 civilians were arrested (CRTV, 2008). However, according to *The National Observatory of Human Rights in Cameroon* (2008) at least 139 people were killed in the five days of protests.

With 157 votes in favor and 5 votes against, the parliament on 10 April 2008 endorsed the removal of presidential term limits from the Constitution. Parliamentarians of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) boycotted the vote. The Biya regime had once more outmanoeuvred the opposition and established the opportunity for President Paul Biya to fossilize himself in power. Considering this revision of the Constitution in Cameroon, the prospects of regime change and advancement of democratic practice turned bleak.

The Biya regime has remained in place, even though twenty years have passed since multiparty politics and the liberty laws were introduced. Legislative and presidential elections are organized routinely, but there are little chances for fairness, because the members of commissions charged with overseeing elections are typically ruling party officials handpicked by the president. In addition, devolution of powers to local

administrators has been slow and superficial (Cheka, 2007); citizens at the local level remain without a voice in the design and implementation of projects that affect them. Worst of all, human rights abuses are commonplace; those who protest against the regime are harassed, imprisoned or tortured. In effect, Cameroon under Paul Biya remains a “virtual democracy” (Joseph, 1999) – authoritarian rule cloaked as liberal democracy.

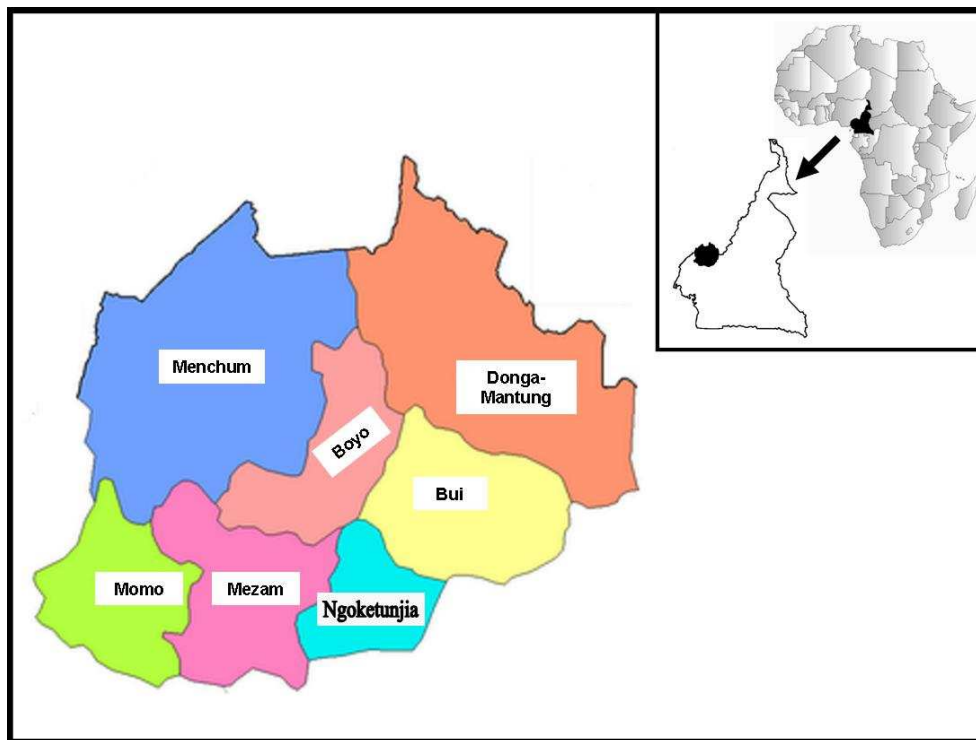
The democratization process in Cameroon as many scholars have noted has stalled (see for example, Mbuagbo and Akoko, 2004; Fonchingong, 2004; Forje, 2006). Paradoxically, this doldrum has occurred despite a rise in civic associations, which were expected to promote democracy by acting as the watchdog against state corrupt, irresponsiveness and abuse of power. The North West (NW) Region is one of the areas in Cameroon where the association boom is greatest. An interviewee describes the NW Region as “*the pace-setter of civil society activity in Cameroon.*”

4.2 ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE IN THE NORTH WEST REGION

The North West Region with its estimated 2.1 million inhabitants is the third most populated of Cameroon’s ten regions. The region is sub-divided into seven administrative units, namely, Mezam Division, Boyo Division, Bui Division, Ngoketunjia Division, Menchum Division, Momo Division, and Donga-Mantung Division (Fig. 4.2). The people of the NW region, as an interviewee remarks, have a strong disposition of “*coming together and doing things together.*” A lively spirit of community and solidarity is a defining feature of the North Westerners. The region teems with social, cultural, development-oriented, religious, and others associations to the extent that the total number of these associations is indeterminable. In short, the NW region is a ‘paradise’ of associational activity, not only in terms of number of associations, but also in terms of variety of associations and vitality of associations. On Saturdays and Sundays in particular, the majority of people in the NW region routinely attend social, cultural,

and/or religious association gatherings: socializing in associations is a typical feature on the weekend agenda.

Fig. 4.2: The North West Region of Cameroon



Source: Adapted from <http://nwcanada.org/>

Table 4.1 below shows that between 2000 and 2008, at least 1,128 new associations were officially registered at the offices of divisional administrators in the NW region. This implies that on average, more than 125 new associations are registered annually in the region. This figure, however, is an underestimate of the actual number of associations that are created yearly in the region, because the data in Table 4.1, obtained from the records of divisional administrators, is incomplete. Also, the data depicts only registered associations and does not take into account the multitude of associations that operate without formal registration. Despite these shortcomings, the data does show that following the introduction of the 1990 liberty laws, an association boom has been taking place in the North West region.

**Table 4.1: Number of New Associations Registered in the
NW Region from 2000 to 2008**

YEAR	NUMBER OF ASSOCIATIONS PER DIVISION							YEARLY TOTAL
	Mezam	Bui	Donga- Mantung	Momo	Menchum	Boyo	Ngoketunjia	
2000	25	3	16	6	5	n.a	n.a	55
2001	42	4	4	7	10	6	n.a	73
2002	23	16	3	7	7	12	n.a	68
2003	55	27	29	19	13	30	n.a	173
2004	89	20	27	9	3	42	2	192
2005	81	14	12	1	4	7	2	121
2006	51	35	15	1	10	11	3	126
2007	34*	20	9	n.a	8	7	2	80
2008	101	57	17	23	4	22	7	231
Unspecified	-	-	-	9		-		9
GRAND TOTAL : 1128								

[* partial data; n.a - not available]

There are a number of reasons for the high prevalence of associations in the NW Region of Cameroon. First, the tendency to form associations can be seen as the manifestation of a custom and tradition of social solidarity that characterizes North Westerners. The people of the NW region place a high value on family, community, tribal and other social bonds. Second, marginalization and neglect of the Anglophone regions by the French dominated state has compelled the people of the NW region to take development into their own hands. Economic crisis and the failures of the state to provide needed services has led to an unprecedented rise of village development associations (VDAs) and self-reliance development initiatives (Fonchingong and Fonjong, 2003). Third, as Fowler (1991) notes about African countries in general, a contributing factor to the escalation in number of associations was the increased availability of donor funding for the nonprofit sector. An interviewee in the North West region of Cameroon elucidates:

People are using the opportunity of globalization to get funds to help themselves. When they learned that they can form an association and get some money, every family began forming an association. This is one of the reasons for the existence of so many associations.

A local government administrator further explains: *“people of the North West Region are very educated, informed and conscious of certain rights. Poverty and underdevelopment of the region makes them politically volatile.”* Forming associations to demand for good governance and better service delivery is thus a manifestation of this political consciousness.

According to the Putnam (1993) associations-democracy thesis, a high stock of social capital – networking, integrative and reciprocal relationships – will exist where there is a vibrant associational life. Social capital, Putnam argues, predisposes people to cooperate in the pursuit of common goals, and this tendency to work together for the achievement of shared interests results in more efficient and more democratic governments. The North West region of Cameroon, as explained above is rich in number of development associations. Taking into account Putnam’s argument, this high number of associations in the case study region raises two important questions. First, what is the level of social capital among development associations in the NW region? Second, to what extent do these associations take relevant actions or measures that influence the system of governance positively? Quantitative measurement of the five attributes of bottom-up pressure (POWER) in the case study provides answers to these questions.

4.3: BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE IN THE NORTH WEST REGION

Quantitative measurement of bottom-up pressure (POWER) in the case study was achieved through the use of a questionnaire. Using the scoring scheme described in the methodology section (Chapter 3) each of the five bottom-up pressure attributes was assessed on a 0-10 scale, based on the questionnaire responses provided by 100 development associations.

Table 4.2 below shows how the sample of 100 associations in the NW region score in the five bottom-up pressure attributes: ‘*Politicization activities*’ (P), ‘*Organization and networking*’ (O), ‘*Working in collaboration with the community*’ (W), ‘*Established links with opposition parties*’ (E), and ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R). The data table of bottom-up pressure attributes depicts the cumulative pressure score for each of one hundred associations, A1 to A100. Given that it is difficult to determine with certainty how each of the bottom-up pressure attribute ranks in importance relative to the others, the total score in Table 4.2 is calculated based on the assumption that the five attributes of pressure (POWER) carry equal weight. In Table 4.2,

$$Total\ Power = P + O + W + E + R$$

The questionnaire data (in Table 4.2) make it possible for us to analyze:

- whether on average, bottom-up is high or low in the association-rich North West region of Cameroon (Research Objective 2);
- whether the level of social capital among associations is high (as the associations-democracy thesis predicts);
- whether social capital and political capital among associations are conjoined. (Research Objective 3); and
- whether bottom-up pressure among associations is homogeneous; indicating a strong influence from the institutional context (Research Objective 4).

Developing a conceptual tool for assessing bottom-up pressure (Research Objective 1) and operationalizing it for data collection has therefore made the fulfilment of Research Objectives 2, 3, and 4 possible.

The scatter diagram (scattergram) is a good way of visualizing the questionnaire data in Table 4.2. Scattergrams depict skewness in statistical distributions, hence they can clearly show whether the bottom-up pressure attributes within the sample of associations are high or low.

**Table 4.2: Bottom-up Pressure Scores for a Sample of 100 Associations
in the North West Region of Cameroon**

Associations (Anonymous)	Pressure Score					Total POWER
	P	O	W	E	R	
	Politicization activities	Organization and networking	Working in collaboration with the community	Established links with opposition parties	Resource Capacity	
A1	6	10	10	2	5	33
A2	5	7	8	0	3	23
A3	1	6	5	0	6	18
A4	1	7	8	0	3	19
A5	2	9	8	0	7	26
A6	3	8	7	0	2	20
A7	7	8	5	1	9	30
A8	7	7	4	2	7	27
A9	7	7	5	3	3	25
A10	3	5	7	1	4	20
A11	3	8	7	0	5	23
A12	8	10	10	6	10	44
A13	3	10	9	2	10	34
A14	4	8	4	2	3	21
A15	3	7	10	1	6	27
A16	5	6	5	1	6	23
A17	3	9	7	1	6	26
A18	0	8	9	0	10	27
A19	4	9	8	1	10	32
A20	6	3	8	6	3	26
A21	3	4	6	0	5	18
A22	1	5	5	0	1	12
A23	5	1	7	2	1	16
A24	0	9	5	0	4	18
A25	2	4	8	2	3	19

Associations (Anonymous)	Pressure Score					Total POWER
	P	O	W	E	R	
	Politicization activities	Organization and networking	Working in collaboration with the community	Established links with opposition parties	Resource Capacity	
A26	7	9	10	3	10	39
A27	3	10	9	1	10	33
A28	1	7	4	3	4	19
A29	2	8	6	0	9	25
A30	1	4	6	0	8	19
A31	5	3	7	3	6	24
A32	4	4	8	0	6	22
A33	1	5	10	2	1	19
A34	1	5	7	6	6	25
A35	0	8	6	0	5	19
A36	1	5	6	0	2	14
A37	4	5	9	4	4	26
A38	1	3	6	6	1	17
A39	2	2	10	4	1	19
A40	0	1	7	3	2	13
A41	2	4	1	0	2	9
A42	2	5	8	3	1	19
A43	0	5	3	2	1	11
A44	2	6	6	7	3	24
A45	1	8	4	0	4	17
A46	0	7	4	1	3	15
A47	4	9	5	5	5	28
A48	2	8	7	2	2	21
A49	2	6	9	1	5	23
A50	6	8	6	0	6	26

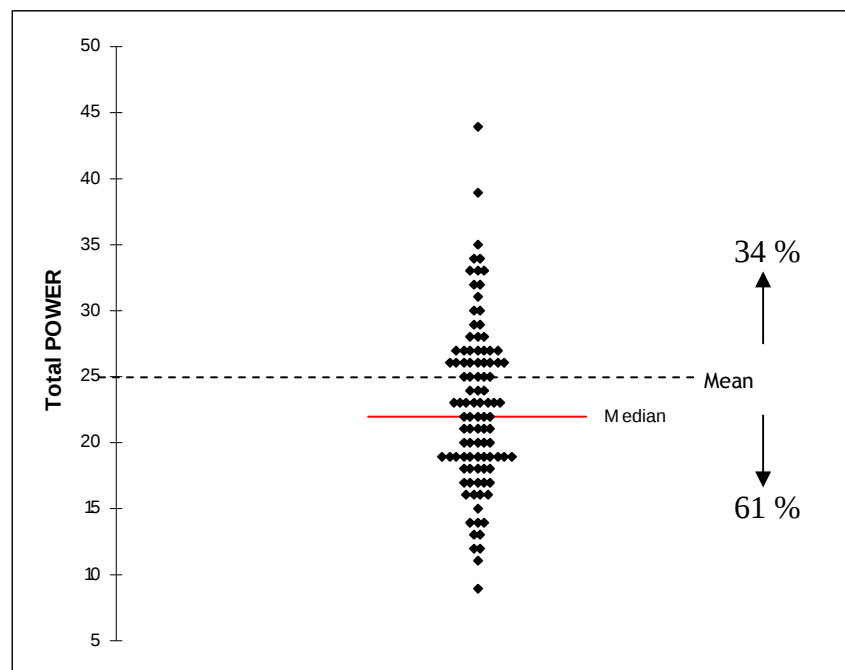
Associations (Anonymous)	Pressure Score					Total POWER
	P	O	W	E	R	
	Politicization activities	Organization and networking	Working in collaboration with the community	Established links with opposition parties	Resource Capacity	
A51	4	10	8	2	5	29
A52	0	6	7	0	9	22
A53	3	8	5	2	4	22
A54	6	5	10	1	9	31
A55	2	5	8	0	5	20
A56	3	5	10	2	7	27
A57	1	5	10	0	9	25
A58	5	10	8	1	4	28
A59	1	10	4	2	2	19
A60	1	4	5	3	3	16
A61	1	4	5	3	3	16
A62	2	5	9	3	6	25
A63	1	4	10	1	3	19
A64	1	5	8	8	1	23
A65	1	1	9	0	3	14
A66	1	9	3	0	5	18
A67	8	8	9	3	7	35
A68	0	1	7	0	4	12
A69	1	4	8	0	1	14
A70	0	1	9	0	3	13
A71	2	4	5	2	3	16
A72	4	6	6	1	6	23
A73	2	9	5	0	10	26
A74	1	6	9	3	4	23
A75	7	9	7	3	6	32

Associations (Anonymous)	Pressure Score					Total POWER
	P	O	W	E	R	
	Politicization activities	Organization and networking	Working in collaboration with the community	Established links with opposition parties	Resource Capacity	
A76	7	8	5	1	5	26
A77	5	6	6	1	4	22
A78	1	3	10	0	3	17
A79	2	4	6	1	4	17
A80	1	7	10	8	4	30
A81	6	6	6	8	8	34
A82	3	2	6	5	5	21
A83	3	7	7	5	4	26
A84	4	8	3	2	5	22
A85	1	7	8	8	3	27
A86	2	4	10	0	4	20
A87	2	3	10	0	4	19
A88	2	6	8	2	3	21
A89	5	4	7	4	3	23
A90	3	5	10	6	3	27
A91	1	7	4	2	3	17
A92	2	4	7	4	3	20
A93	2	6	3	6	1	18
A94	5	10	10	0	4	29
A95	2	5	10	6	4	27
A96	2	5	10	4	3	24
A97	1	7	10	4	4	26
A98	2	4	10	8	3	27
A99	2	4	10	8	4	28
A100	1	6	10	3	1	21

4.3.1 Total Bottom-Up Pressure among NW Region Associations

A scattergram of the ‘Total POWER’ scores from Table 4.2 reveals that on average, bottom-up pressure among associations in the North West Region is negatively skewed. As Figure 4.3 depicts, the median of the ‘Total POWER’ scores for the sample of associations lies below the mean. This negative skewness implies that on average, bottom-up associations in the North West region is low. To be specific, 61 percent of associations in the sample have below-average values for ‘total bottom-up pressure’, while only 39 percent have above average scores. Separate scatter plots for each of the five bottom-up pressure attributes shows that not all five attributes account for this low cumulative pressure in the case study.

Fig. 4.3: Scattergram – ‘Total POWER’ Scores for Associations in the NW Region

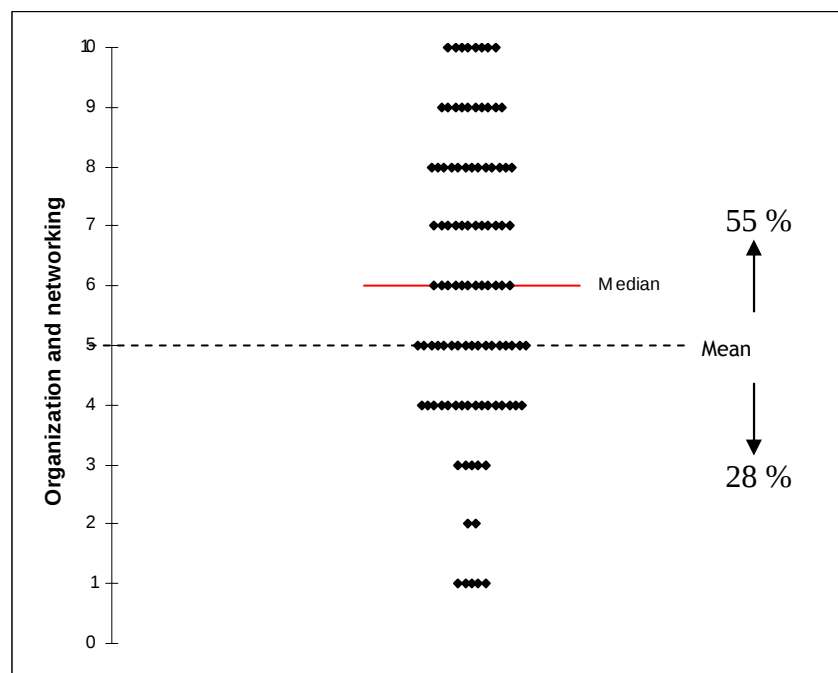


4.3.2 Social Capital among NW Region Associations

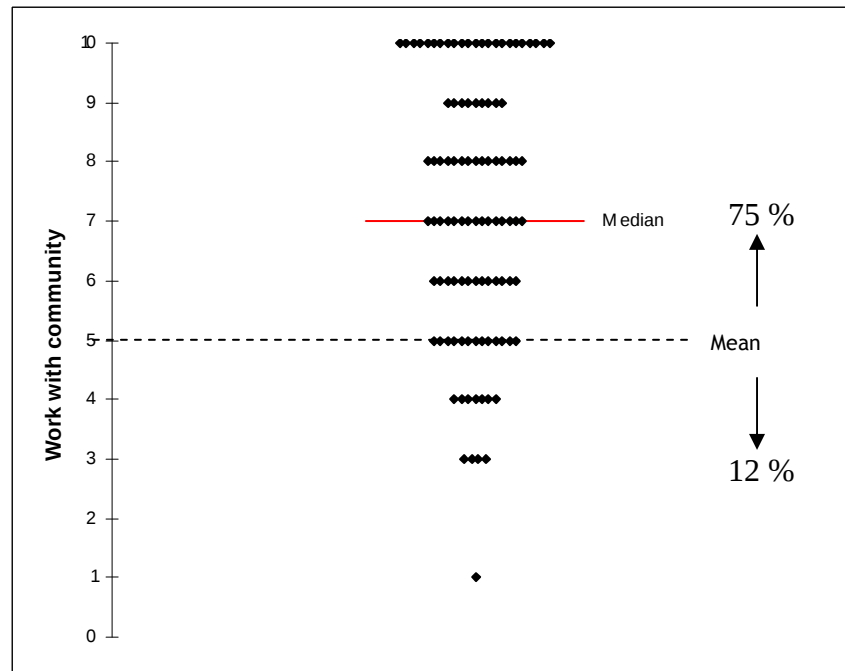
To recall, the social capital attributes of the POWER framework are: ‘*Organization and networking*’ (O) among associations and the extent to which development associations ‘*Work in collaboration with the community*’ (W). Figure 4.4, and 4.5 respectively show

that the degree of ‘*organization and networking*’ (O) and the extent to which associations ‘*work in collaboration with the community*’ (W) are high in the NW Region. These two pressure attributes (which reflect the social capital of associations) are positively skewed, since their median scores are significantly higher than the mean score of 5. As the scattergram for ‘*organization and networking*’ (O) illustrates, 55 percent of the sample of associations lie above the mean value while only 28 percent lie below. Regarding the extent to which associations ‘*work in collaboration with the community*’ (W), 75 percent of associations in the sample score above-average, while only 12 percent score below-average. Unlike for these two attributes (O and W), associations in the NW Region show low scores for the other bottom-up pressure attributes.

Fig. 4.4: Scattergram – “*Organization and Networking*” (O) Scores for Associations in the NW Region



**Fig. 4.5: Scattergram – “Working in collaboration with the community” (W)
Scores for Associations in the NW Region**



4.3.3 Political Capital among NW Region Associations

Associations in the NW Region show very low scores for the political capital attributes of bottom-up pressure, that is, ‘*politicization activities*’ (P) and ‘*established links with the opposition*’ (E). The scattergrams, for these two parameters (Fig. 4.6 and Fig. 4.7) reflect high negative skewness, given that the median scores for both attributes are significantly lower than the mean value of 5. The scatter plot for ‘*politicization activities*’ (P) demonstrates that 78 percent of associations in the sample have below average scores, while only 14 percent of them have above-average scores (Fig. 4.6). Similarly, the scattergram for ‘*established links with the opposition*’ (E) shows that 83 percent of associations in the sample have below-average scores (Fig. 4.7). Only 14 percent of the one hundred associations report above-average scores for affiliations with political parties in the opposition.

Fig. 4.6: Scattergram – “*Politicization activities*” (P) Scores for Associations in the NW Region

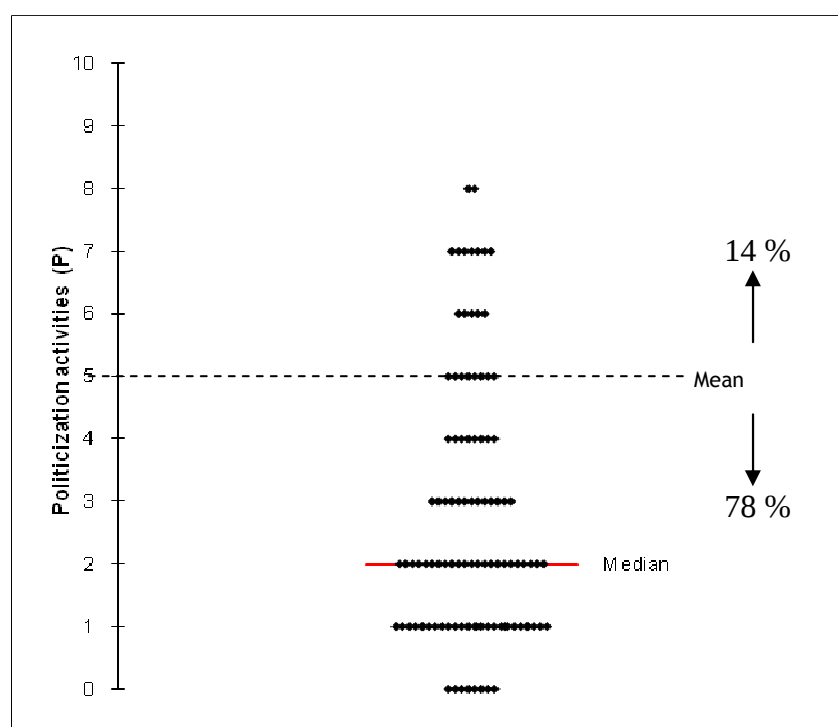
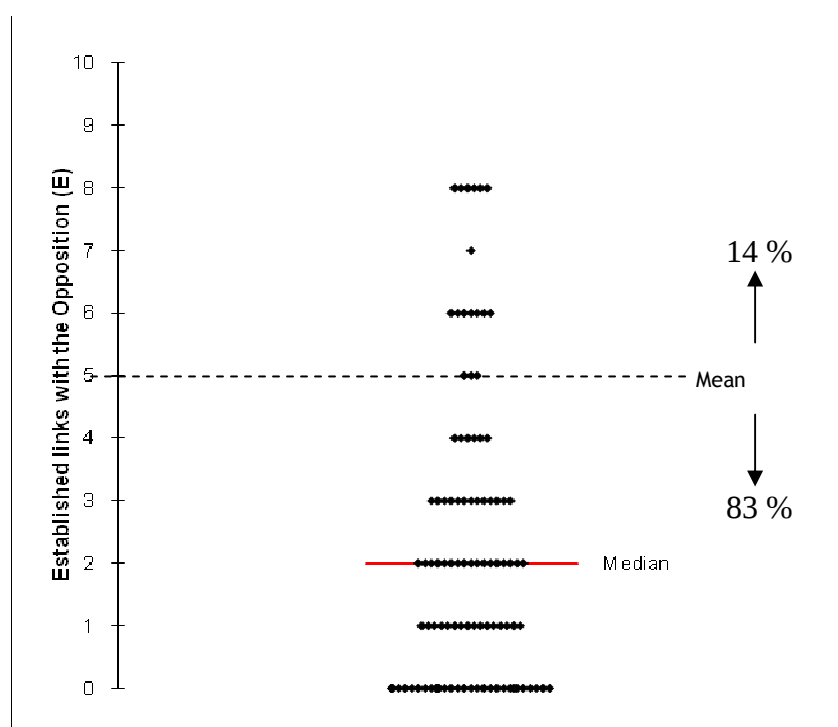


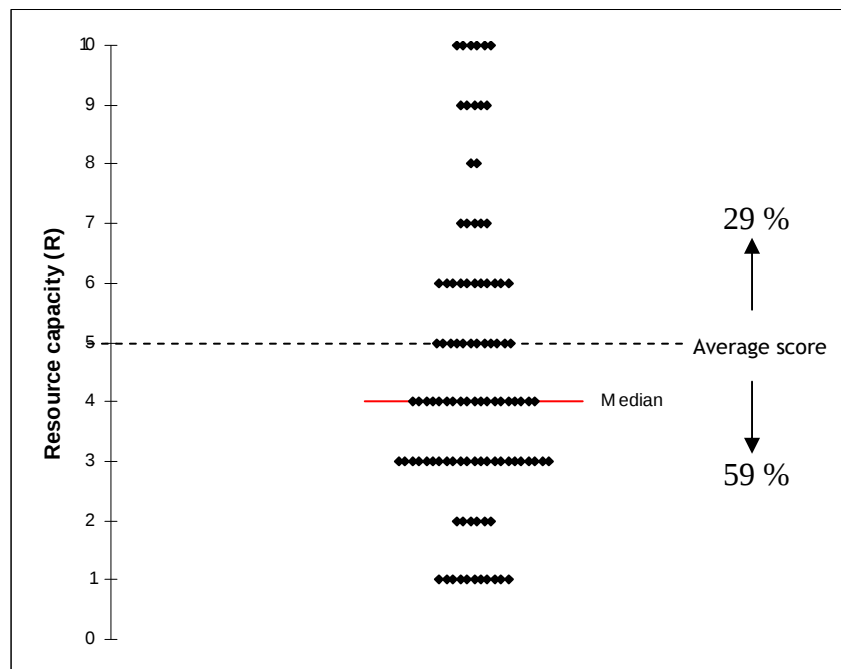
Fig. 4.7: Scattergram – “*Established links with the Opposition*” (E) Scores for Associations in the NW Region



4.3.4 Resource Capacity among NW Region Associations

The scatter diagram for ‘*resource capacity*’ (R) scores shows that a majority of associations in the sample have low access to resources (Fig. 4.8). The negative skewness for ‘*resource capacity*’ (R), however, is not as pronounced as for the two political capital attributes of bottom-up pressure (P and E). While 59 percent of associations in the sample rank below-average in ‘*resource capacity*’ (R), 29 percent rank above-average.

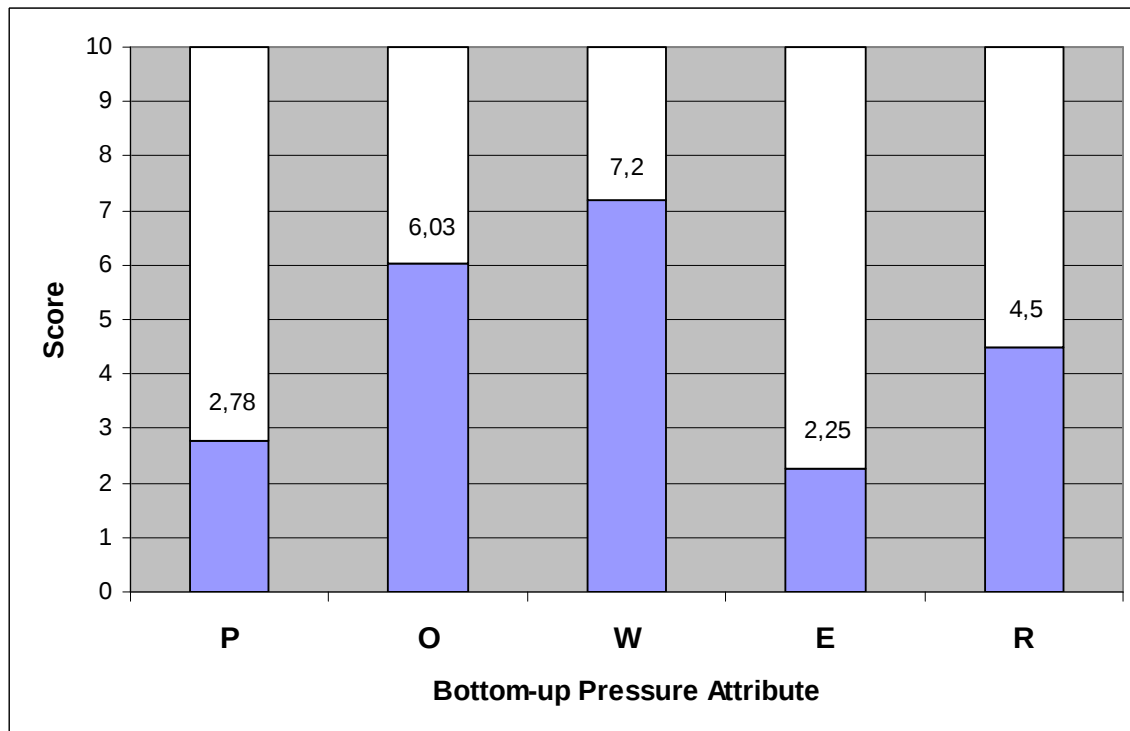
Fig. 4.8: Scattergram – “Resource capacity” (R) Scores for Associations in the NW Region



To summarize, the questionnaire data shows that associations in the NW Region, on the one hand, exhibit high social capital, and on the other hand, they have very low political capital and resource capacities. As the bar chart (Fig. 4.9) illustrates, the average scores for ‘*organization and networking*’ (O) and the extent to which associations ‘*work in collaboration with the community*’ (W) – which are measures of social capital – are both high. On the other hand, the mean scores for ‘*politicization activities*’ (P) and ‘*established links with the opposition*’ (E) – which are indicators or measures of political capital – are both low. The data therefore suggests that social capital and political capital are not

coupled. In other words, although the existence of a high density of associations may generate high social capital, this is not necessarily accompanied by political capital, which is an important element for the promotion of democracy.

Fig. 4.9: Average Bottom-up Pressure (POWER) Capacities for Associations in the NW Region

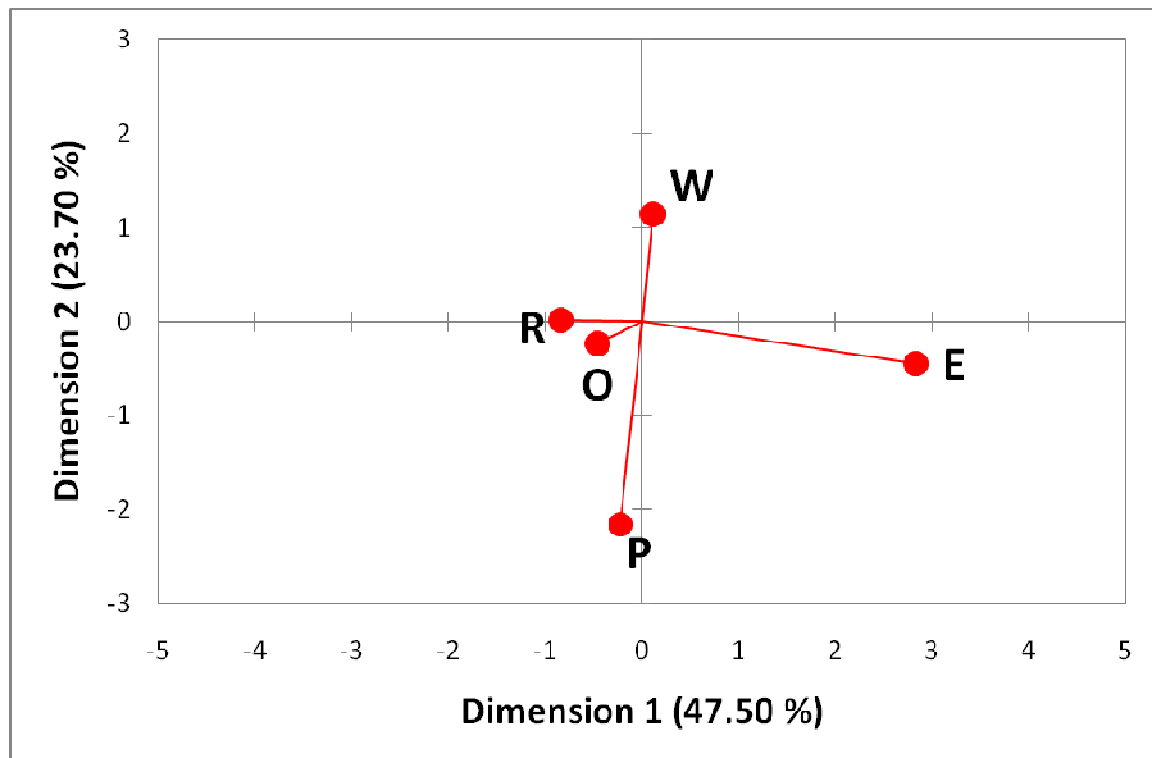


4.3.5 The Relationship between Bottom-up Pressure Attributes

A correspondence analysis (CA) graph of the five bottom-up pressure attributes affirms that social capital and political capital among associations in the case study are decoupled. In correspondence analysis biplots, the length of vector line for a particular variable reflects the degree of variances of that variable: “the longer the line, the higher is the variance” within the sample (Kohler and Luniak, 2005: 209). Meanwhile, the cosine of the angle (α) between two vector lines reflects the coefficient of correlation between variables that the vector lines correspond to (ibid). The correlation coefficient measures degree of correspondence in a range from -1 to $+1$. A correlation coefficient of -1 represents a perfect negative correlation; a coefficient of zero (0) signifies no correlation; and a

coefficient of +1 depicts a perfectly positive correlation. Fig. 4.10 below is the biplot (correspondence analysis chart) obtained when the questionnaire data in Table 4.2 is analyzed in XLSAT.

Fig. 4.10: Correspondence Analysis Plot showing the Correlations between Bottom-up Pressure Attributes



The lengths of the vector lines in the biplot (Fig. 4.10) show that two bottom-up pressure attributes, namely, '*Politicization activities*' (P) and '*Established links with the opposition*' (E) have a high variance. Simply put, the biplot demonstrates that for the majority of associations in NW Cameroon, the level of political capital digresses significantly from the mean score of 5. As the scattergrams, Figures 4.6 and 4.7 above illustrate, this digression is negative rather than positive. The differential lengths of the vector lines in the biplot, therefore, raise one important question viz.: 'why does political capital (P and E) show a high variance when social capital (O and W) shows a low variance?' The next chapter will address this question.

To facilitate explanation, the correlations between social capital variables and political capital variables in the biplot are presented in Table 4.3 below. As the table illustrates, ‘*Organization and network*’ (O) and ‘*Politicization activities*’ (P) are positively correlated. This implies that in the NW Region those associations that engage the most in networking also tend to be more involved in advocacy activities. This observation supports Putnam’s (1993) argument that social capital predisposes people to make demands on the government. Though positive, the observed correlation between ‘*Organization and network*’ (O) and ‘*Politicization activities*’ (P) in the NW Region is weak (Correlation coefficient of +0.51).

Table 4.3: Biplot Interpretation 1 – The Relationship between Social Capital and Political Capital

Social Capital Attribute	Political Capital Attribute	Angle between vectors (α)	Correlation Coefficient ($\text{Cos } \alpha$)	Description of Correlation
Organization and networking (O)	Politicization activities (P)	59°	+ 0.51	Weak positive correlation
	Established links with the opposition (E)	150°	– 0.87	Strong negative correlation
Working in collaboration with the community (W)	Politicization activities (P)	181°	– 0.99	Very strong negative correlation
	Established links with the opposition (E)	94°	– 0.07	No correlation

Table 4.3 also shows that there is a strong negative correlation (coefficient of –0.87) between ‘*Organization and network*’ (O) and ‘*Established links with the opposition*’ (E). In other words, associations that engage in CSO networks seldom establish ties with opposition political parties. High social capital among associations in the North West Region strongly discourages political capital that takes the form of opposition political party affiliations. Furthermore, there is a very strong negative correlation (coefficient of –0.99) between ‘*Working in collaboration with the population*’ (W) and ‘*Politicization activities*’ (P). This implies that associations with strong community relations (ties) seldom engage in advocacy activities. The biplot shows no correlation between the extent to which associations ‘*Work in collaboration with the community*’ (W) and the extent to which they ‘*Establish links with the opposition*’ (E). Overall, the correspondence analysis confirms

that social capital and political capital among associations in the NW Region are not coupled.

Correspondence analysis also shows that while there is no correlation between the ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R) of associations and ‘*Politicization activities*’ (Table 4.4 below), resource capacity is strongly correlated with ‘*Organization and networking*’ (O). This means that associations with better access to resources are more engaged in CSO networking. The biplot shows that a very strong negative correlation exists between ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R) and ‘*Established links with the opposition*’ (E): well resourced associations in the NW Region hardly ever try to advance their goals by forging ties with opposition political parties.

Table 4.4: Biplot interpretation 2 – The Relationship between ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R) and other Bottom-up Pressure Attributes

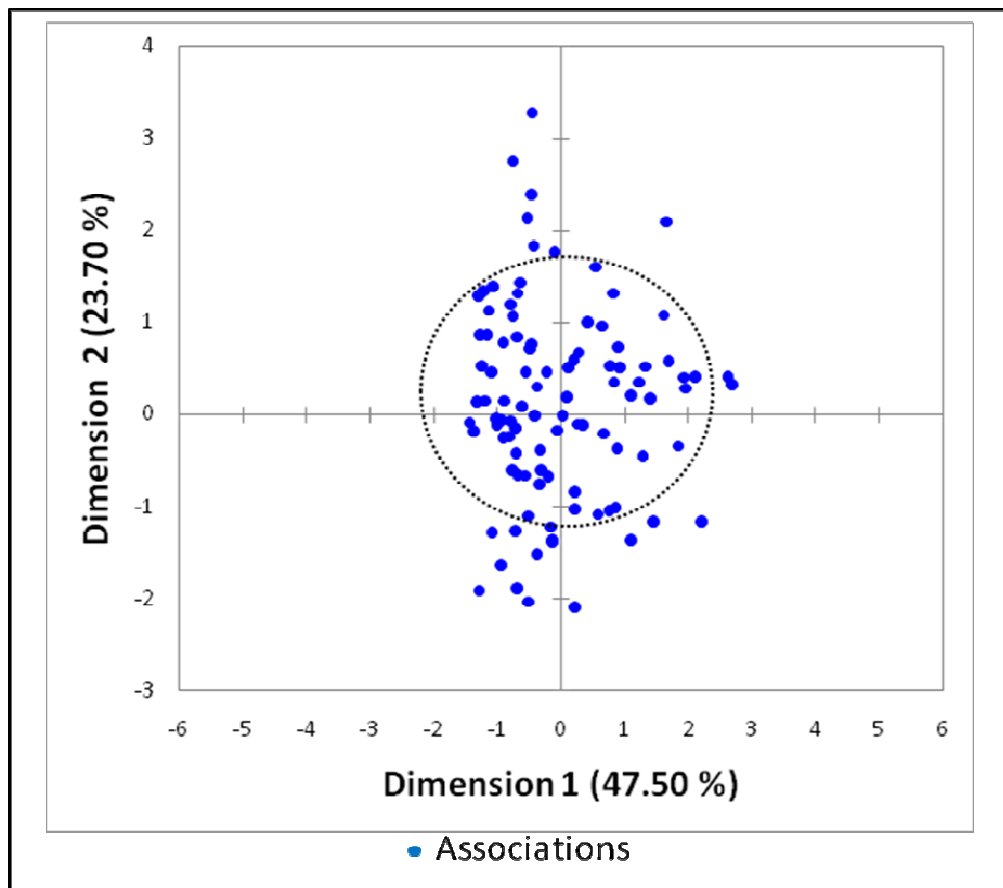
	Political Capital Attribute	Angle between vectors (α)	Correlation Coefficient (Cos α)	Description of Correlation
Resource Capacity (R)	Politicization activities (P)	87°	+ 0.05	No correlation
	Organization and networking (O)	28°	+ 0.88	Strong positive correlation
	Working in collaboration with the community (W)	93°	– 0.05	No correlation
	Established links with the opposition (E)	176 °	– 0.99	Very strong negative correlation

4.4 INFLUENCE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT: STRONG OR WEAK?

According to the theory of institutional isomorphism – reviewed in the previous chapter – organizations which face the same kinds of institutional constraints within a given environment tend to resemble each other (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The degree of similarity (or homogeneity) among organizations in the given institutional environment would, therefore, be a reflection of the constraining power of institutions (regulations, norms and cultural codes) within the given context. In other words, the greater the influence of the institutional context, the more similar the affected organizations would be.

Figure 4.11 below is a correspondence analysis graph which maps the sample of one hundred North West Region associations (A1 to A100) in relation to one another. The correspondence analysis graph demonstrates that regarding bottom-up pressure, there is a high degree of homogeneity among associations in NW Cameroon. This high degree of homogeneity is reflected by the level of clustering of association markers on Figure 4.11. The correspondence analysis graph, therefore, indicates that the influence of the institutional context on associations in the North West Region is strong.

Fig. 4.11: Correspondence Analysis Graph showing the Degree of Homogeneity among CSOs in the NW Region of Cameroon



Based on the above findings, I advance the following conjectures to be examined through qualitative data in the next chapter:

- a) the institutional context moderates the abilities of associations to develop political capital (P and E).

- b) Whether or not political capital develops alongside social capital depends on the institutional environment in which associations emerge.

4.5 SUMMING UP

This chapter has shown that, overall, bottom-up pressure among development associations in the North West Region of Cameroon is low. Most importantly, it has revealed that social capital and political capital among associations in the case study are not coupled. This non-correlation between social and political capital thus challenges the argument that associations by virtue of generating high social capital would act as political forces for democratization.

The chapter has also demonstrated that the influence of the institutional context on development associations in the case study is strong. This finding leads one to speculate that the institutional context moderates political capital among associations in the case study; hence the nature of the institutional context determines whether or not political capital will accompany high social capital. Investigating this speculation requires a qualitative approach. How institutions – regulations, norms and cultural codes – influence bottom-up pressure in associations of the NW Region is the subject of the next chapter.

5

THE EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONS ON THE PRESSURE CAPACITIES OF ASSOCIATIONS: CAMEROON IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses how the institutional environment, which consists of regulations, norms and cultural codes of conduct, acts as an intervening factor in the associations-democracy equation. Interviews show that because development associations in the NW Region of Cameroon are heavily reliant on donors and the government for resources, they succumb to government and donor regulations that have constraining effects on their political activities. Also, unethical norms, such as the misappropriation of donor fund, are so widespread among NGOs that, in the eyes of many local communities, these associations have lost credibility as promoters of positive change. Furthermore, CSOs in the NW Region uphold a norm of ‘non-intervention in politics’ and this limits the pressure they have on the government. Qualitative data also shows that stiff competition over donor resources weakens CSO networking, while an entrenched culture of respect for elites and leaders limits the disposition of associations to challenge authority. This chapter concludes that despite the high social capital in the NW Region, the institutional context moderates the abilities of associations to develop political capital. This implies that whether or not political capital develops alongside social capital depends on the institutional environment in which associations exist.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Expectations that the civil society will grow rapidly and advance democracy were high for sub-Saharan Africa, when most countries in the region introduced multiparty politics in the 90s. As researchers took stock of the progress – or lack of progress – of democracy in countries of the sub-continent, these aspirations waned. An increasing number of scholars working on democracy in Africa began to describe the concept of civil society and its hypothesized effects on democracy as Western-centric and overly optimistic. Tangri

(1998), for example, noted that the conceptualization of civil society as a sphere of organized protest was not suitable for analysing the African context which is characterized by ethnic divisions, patronage politics, and sectarianism. Consequently, he argued that “civil society is an artefact pointing to the future of African politics, not to its present (ibid: 127).” Critical views of this nature emphasized that to adequately understand the democratization potential of civil society in Africa, *the institutional context* in which civic groups existed needed to be taken into consideration.

Institutional analysis is useful, when general realist claims fail to hold, as is the case with the associations-to-democracy prediction in Africa. Institutional analysis takes power realities into consideration, hence it can clarify the conditions under which realist propositions can or cannot apply (Keohane and Martin, 1995). Analysing civil society associations in relation to the institutional context means taking into account how the socio-cultural, economic and political system affect association pressure for democracy. Robert Scott’s characterization of institutions as comprising, (i) regulatory, (ii) normative and (iii) cultural elements has analytical value. This section discusses the effects of institution on the pressure capacities of associations in Cameroon by focusing on these three elements.

One challenge for institutional analysis within a single case study is the extrapolation or generalization of results to a wider population. To determine whether the influence of institutions on development associations in NW Cameroon can be generalized to other sub-Saharan African countries, two questions need to be answered. First, is the socio-political context in sub-Saharan African countries similar? Second, are development associations in other sub-Saharan African countries structured by the same neoliberal paradigm that governs the activities of development associations in Cameroon?

Kandiwa (2006) points out that since gaining independence in the 60s, countries in sub-Saharan Africa have undergone appreciable socioeconomic and political diversification. Consequently, he cautions that conclusions drawn from one country may not be applicable

across the whole sub-continent. Rather, they would apply to particular sub-regions or sub-clusters of countries which have remained fairly similar. The Central and West African regions, he notes, remain quite similar; but differ from the South and Eastern regions. Following Kandiwa (ibid), one can argue that analysis of the effects of institution on the pressure capacities of associations in Cameroon can also apply to Central and West African countries that have a similar socio-political and economic situation.

In addition, since the beginning of the association boom in Africa about 3 decades ago, donor support to development associations on the continent has established a paternalistic relationship between the western funders and the local NGOs (Michael, 2004). Simply put, in development practice, the donors are the pied pipers who play the tune, and development associations in Africa simply dance to whatever tune is played. The development paradigm, the donor-recipient relations, in which CSOs in Cameroon operate, is very much the same across Africa. Consequently, one can argue that conclusions drawn from the experience of CSOs in Cameroon would have relevance for development associations in other sub-Saharan African countries. This said, let us now examine how government, donor and other societal relationships – acting through regulations, norms and cultural codes – influence the pressure capacities of associations in Cameroon. In the analysis, I will draw parallels to case studies in other African countries where relevant.

5.2 THE EFFECTS OF REGULATIONS BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE

5.2.1: Government Regulatory Constraints

Some of the strongest constraints to the pressure capacities of associations in Cameroon come from the state regulatory systems in which CSOs operate. The law on freedom of association in Cameroon gave citizens the right to form associations, but the same law banned political activities that are important for associations to mount pressure on the government. A local government official points out that “*the state passed the [freedom of association] law with some strings attached; it was like throwing a spear and holding the tail end.*”

The Association Law (Law No.90/053 of 1990, modified in 1999) states that associations must be apolitical in nature. Generally-speaking, by ‘apolitical’, the law implies that association must not align themselves with political parties, and they must not pursue political activities. What constitutes a political activity, however, is vague and elastic. The law, therefore, gives the government the leeway to classify as political – and hence illegal – any association activity which challenges the integrity of the regime in power.

Furthermore, the Association Law requires associations to apply to government administrators (Senior Divisional Officers) for legal recognition. The mandatory documents for making such an application include: the constitution of the association, its aims and objectives, the names of its founders and its sources of funding. This requirement allows the government to monitor the activities of associations, and also makes it possible for the government to deny legal rights to those associations that are activist and political in orientation. For example, in reply to an application for legal recognition from the *Upper Ashong Cultural and Development Association* in 2001, the Senior Divisional Officer of the Donga-Mantung Division of the North West Region wrote:

After examination at my level, it is deduced that...[your association] has some political inclination despite claims...that it is a cultural and development association. To this effect, the draft constitution should be returned to the founders.... (Official Letter: Ref No. E30/201/Vol.4/730)

The use of mandatory registration to censor the activities of associations is not peculiar to Cameroon. Dicklitch and Lwanga (2003) note that in Uganda, the state uses delays or refusal of legal recognition to discourage or suppress human rights advocacy activities in associations. Proof of legal registration is one of the first eligibility criteria which associations must meet to gain access to funding. In their calls for project proposals from associations, donors often emphasise that they will only fund legally recognized associations. This legal recognition prerequisite forces associations in Africa to avoid political activities (Berhanu, 2002) or affiliations with political parties. An NGO worker in NW Cameroon explains how the Association Law limits their political capacities:

If CSOs start practicing partisan politics, the state will close them down because it will think of them as the opposition.

To a large extent, CSOs in Cameroon have failed to contest the contradictory Association Law which claims to grant freedom but also greatly limits their abilities to influence state policies. The state in 1999 tightened the law even further by adding a clause which prohibits associations from accepting foreign aid. Contrary to the government claims, the goal of the new clause was not to reduce CSO misappropriation of donor funds. Rather, its main goal was to block the external donor support that was fuelling the growth of associations. In silent revolution, development associations in NW Cameroon ignore the new clause and continue to receive financial support from foreign donors.

Associations that oppose or criticize state policies or practices, especially through protest marches, often become victims of government harassment and victimisation. In Cameroon, the government has the right to ban demonstrations, and to punish defaulters with a fine of between €150 (100,000 FCFA) and €1500 (1 million FCFA) and/or three months to twelve months of imprisonment (Law No.90/053 of 1990, modified in 1999), even though this contradicts the principle of freedom of expression. A development association worker describes the challenging circumstances in which activist associations in the town of Kumbo in the NW region operate:

As CSOs, we are not much different from a mosquito if we stand against the state.... If you mobilize people to act against the wrongs of the state, the government will accuse you of [or arrest you for] inciting people to revolution.

Orvis (2003) observes a similar situation in Kenya, where NGO activists report high incidence of government harassment. Fear of government victimisation, therefore, keeps most development associations from politicizing their development claims.

One of the greatest constraints to activism or political capital in associations is a tendency for donors to channel funds for local CSOs through the government. As an example, the *European Union Support Program for the Strengthening of Civil Society (PASOC)*² in Cameroon operates in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Regional

² Programme d'Appui à la Structuration de la société Civile au Cameroun (PASOC)

Development. The government's position as a partner in the PASOC program, gives it the power to direct funding away from association activities which it finds 'uncomfortable'. As a CSO activist highlights, *"when the PASOC selection committee decides on projects for funding, the government scrutinises them and selects which CSO projects should be funded."* The donor philosophy that a government which is fundamentally undemocratic and corrupt can genuinely contribute in strengthening activism in civil society is absurd and naive, if not pretentious. Strong government involvement in the European Union (EU) funded project opened an opportunity for the corruption that is prevalent in the administration to compromise the good governance objectives of the PASOC program. An interviewee points out that *"the state officials who control the program authorized projects depending on the kickbacks they can get from associations."* Associations, therefore, end up executing approved projects with only a fraction of the funds allocated for these projects.

Controversy around coordination of the PASOC program in the NW Region shows how systemic corruption in the Cameroonian context derails donor initiatives from their good governance goals. The main objectives of the *EU Support Program for the Strengthening of Civil Society* (PASOC) were to promote transparency, accountability, networking and advocacy within the civil society through coordination organizations, such as CSO networks. According to many CSO interviewees, *The North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO), one of the most dynamic CSO networks in the NW Region, was in the best position to coordinate the PASOC program in the NW region. First, as a network organization, NWADO's main aim was to build cooperation among development associations and thereby increase their influence of the government. Second, NWADO had considerable experience in coordinating association activities. Third, the NWADO Secretariat was located in the centre of region's capital, Bamenda; and other associations would have easy access to any CSO support facilities (capacity building workshops, computers and internet) placed there. Despite these advantages, the PASOC selection committee did not select NWADO to coordinate the civil society strengthening program in the North West Region. Paradoxically, coordination of the civil society

strengthening program was entrusted to INADES-Formation, a NWADO member organisation, whose secretariat was located in the outskirts of the town and not readily accessible to many associations. An interviewee explains that government corruption compromised the PASOC program:

it was clear to everyone that NWADO was favourite since its objectives were in line with what PASOC was out to promote. However, INADES-Formation and a certain individual [name withheld] used personal relationships to lobby at the level of the government in Yaounde. The EU expert was pushed to the wall and in the end he yielded.

The support program came in to restructure the civil society, but ironically, as a CSO worker notes, “*the Cameroonian system instead restructured it; the program danced to the tune of corruption played everywhere.*”

As corruption is entrenched within the government, the empowerment objectives of donor-funded programs have often been thwarted when such programs go through the government. An interviewee notes:

the spirit of corruption that has eaten into the PASOC program, is the same spirit that reigned in the multi-stakeholder program (PCPA)³ and in the Care-Cameroon program. Projects were funded according to personal relationships, and not according to the content of proposals. If another program comes through the government, the same disease will infect it.

In addition to clientelism, state officials in charge of donor-funded programs tend to create their own associations to which they authorize funding. As a result of these practices, donor funds and resources get directed to the wrong associations and no real advocacy actions take place on the ground. Corruption is so deep-rooted at all levels of the Cameroonian society that non-players of the game tend to be the losers. Development associations have been co-opted into the very corrupt practices which they are expected to advocate against. The struggle among associations to grab their own piece of the pie, by hook or crook, undermines the ability of associations to develop a shared vision of pressuring for transparency and accountability.

³ Programme Concerté Pluri-Acteurs

In essence, the government's control over funds for civil society organizations, has forced many associations to either tone down or totally give up their critical voice. The *Cameroon Teacher's Trade Union* (CATTU) was once the most vocal advocate for teacher's rights and better education facilities for Anglophone citizens. Today, however, the trade union is the prime promoter of the 'begging civil society' syndrome among associations in the NW region. For example, following government creation of a Higher Teacher's Training School in the NW region, the CATTU leader on 28 April 2009, mobilized other associations for an unusual civil society march: a 'March of Thanks' to government. In this march, the trade union leader proclaimed:

we are here to call on our President: father, we need a university....We know that when we say thank you, more will come [Translated].

Even though the march was portrayed as apolitical, slogans like "*More Power to you Mr. President*" featured prominently.

In hope of winning favour from the government, the CATTU leader, succeeded in influencing associations to give up the pressure philosophy which perceives development as a right which government owes to citizens. By participating in the march and expressing thanks to the government for what they termed the "*gift*" of a Higher Teacher's Training School, CSOs inadvertently, endorsed the patronage culture of the Biya regime, where supporters of government get rewarded while critics remain marginalized.

Another immense constraint to CSO activism in NW Cameroon is the tendency for the government to infiltrate the civil society and to disguise its political missions as civil society campaigns. For example, on 8 July 2009, the CATTU leader organized another so-called civil society 'March of Thanks to the Head of State', following the appointment of an indigene of the NW Region as Prime Minister. Many NGOs in the NW Region boycotted the march and criticised it as an initiative that encouraged tribalism. Prominent ruling party officials were at the forefront of the purported apolitical civil society rally which proclaimed support to government:

We the sons and daughters of the NW region...unanimously thank the head of state, President Paul Biya for...appointing our son as Prime Minister....We hereby pledge and guarantee our unflinching support to the head of state...(Official Motion of Support Letter to President Paul Biya, 8 July 2009)

Cultural associations which were mobilized to participate in the march were financially rewarded. The so-called civil society 'March of Thanks', which featured the president's campaign posters, was in reality a government strategy to mobilize regional support for the head of state. The leader of CATTU who was once a fervent activist against marginalization of the Anglophone region, had embraced the practice of politics of the belly. Although prominent CSOs in the NW Region like NWADO criticized the march, they failed to put out a statement exposing the CATTU leader as a defector who was misusing the NW Region civil society to advance his own political ambition. Toure (2002: 2) notes that in Liberia, the government used the strategy of infiltration to limit effective organization within the civil society, and hence their potential for radical opposition.

The government also infiltrates and weakens civil society organizations through government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs). By handpicking GONGOs to represent the civil society in decision-making forums, the government gives top-down administration a semblance of participation and legitimacy. Given this practice, genuine CSOs in NW Cameroon have developed apathy towards trying to contribute to policy-making because they believe their ideas would not be taken into consideration. An NGO worker puts it thus: *"when you cry out loud against an issue and nothing changes, you tend to lose steam."* CSOs have become disenchanted with advocacy activities, because the government has proven irresponsible. A CSO worker explains: *"We have lost many brothers and sisters because they expressed their rights to protest, and so far, nothing has changed. That is why as CSOs, we only use our own gentle ways to seek change."*

5.2.2: Donor Regulatory Constraints

Western donors' support to associations in developing countries is based on the belief that the civil society can contribute in reforming corrupt or ineffective governments. In practice, however, the kind of projects which donor funding targets makes it difficult for

development associations to play this reformist role. Donor predilection for projects that seek to meet the practical needs of people is a contributing factor to the low political capital among associations. As a CSO worker explains, “*funders often evaluate CSOs in term of the direct impact they make on beneficiaries,*” rather than in terms of advocacy. Given their dependence on donor funds, local associations forgo activism and streamline their activities according to donor preferences. Zaidi (1999) argues that the increased flow of donor aid to NGOs determines the agenda of these organisations. In other words, the problems which NGOs see as most pertinent in their localities are often predetermined by donors. The activities of CSOs change according to the buzzwords that are in fashion among donors: HIV/AIDS, community sanitation, environment protection, the girl-child, primary healthcare, access to water, basic education, and so on. Seldom are political activities, such as election monitoring, government accountability, government auditing, corruption reporting, and policy advocacy on the agenda of donors. It has become increasingly apparent to funders that improving the livelihoods of people, through service delivery activities cannot bring about sustainable change in governance. With this realisation, “*funders are gradually directing resources towards lobbying, advocacy and policy change activities*” (Interview with CSO worker, 2009). Nonetheless, because of their continuous pre-occupation with donor preferences, associations still tend to adopt advocacy activities which are ill-suited for effecting governance change in their contexts (De Waal, 2003: 485).

To qualify for funding, donors typically demand that associations be non-partisan and non-political. This donor requirement partly explains why “*Established links with the opposition*” (E) – with a score of 2.25 on 10 – is the lowest of the five bottom-up pressure attributes among associations in NW Cameroon. For donors, partisanship can strengthen social cleavages while jeopardizing fairness in the development interventions of CSOs. The pressure to be non-partisan forces associations into the irony of trying to achieve participatory governance and equality in development without challenging the regime politics that are responsible for exclusion and inequality. For CSOs to reform the system of governance, they need to be “embroiled in partisan politics and the distortions that

accompany the struggle for state power” (Edwards and Hulme: 1996:5-6). While associations mostly represent the interests of small groups, political parties can integrate these interests into a common policy position (Sabatini, 2002). Therefore, by discouraging partisanship among development associations, donors contribute in severing the political linkages between different groups which is vital for a social movement for participatory democracy to grow.

In addition, although participation is en vogue among donors, the projects for which they earmark funding often fail to include activities that truly encourage participation values. For example, NGOs workers in NW Cameroon note that most donors prohibit the use of funds for baseline surveys, which is a necessary element for true involvement of beneficiaries in development projects. A CSO worker explains:

For a project to be truly participatory, it has to begin with a baseline survey. The baseline survey is where the voice of the beneficiaries must start coming in; otherwise, it will not be truly taken into consideration in subsequent stages. Without baseline surveys, how can donors expect true participation? We merely conceive projects and impose them on the communities.

Quantitative data shows that the degree to which associations in NW Cameroon “work in collaboration with communities” (W), is high – 7.2 on 10. However, qualitatively, involvement of communities in projects is at best superficial in the case of NGOs, given that most donors do not permit the use of funds for consultative processes. NGOs have become too professional and socially disconnected from communities. In other words, they are organizations at the service of the grassroots, and not per se grassroots organizations. They lack community embeddedness: the involvement, solidarity, and trust-building traits that are the hallmark of grassroots organizations like village development associations (VDAs). This low community embeddedness significantly limits the capacity of NGOs to mobilize citizens for advocacy action. Grassroots associations in NW Cameroon surpass NGOs in terms of numbers, but donors consider them too informal and unworthy as channels for development aid.

In addition, funders typically provide financial resources for the execution of specific CSO project activities and often refuse to fund the running costs of CSOs. These running costs

include rents, basic office material, and salaries for staff. A CSO worker points out that *“an organization cannot implement a project if it is not in operation.”* Since the execution of donor-funded projects requires considerable time and effort, NGOs have devised strategies of squeezing out staff salaries from project implementation funds. For example, in their accountability reports, CSOs can inflate the funds spent on some of the project activities or materials. Despite these strategies, the financial compensations which NGOs in NW Cameroon can offer to staff tend to be irregular and low. Many interviewed NGO coordinators pointed out that they could not employ staff on a permanent basis because their organization could not offer the minimum monthly salary of €38 (25,000 FCFA) required by law. Due to low salaries, ‘staff drain’ – the loss of trained personnel to other sectors – is high among NGOs in NW Cameroon. An NGO worker points out that *“advocacy and lobby requires capacity and there is a very serious shortage of human resource capacity within the civil society in the NW region.”*

On the one hand, donors support regular capacity-building and empowerment programs in NGOs. On the other hand, the donor regulations that prohibit the use of funds for staff salaries make it difficult for built capacity to stay in these civil society organizations. An interviewee describes NGOs as *“a training ground”* for young graduates, who eventually move off to greener pastures. Another NGO employee elaborates: *“workers leave CSOs because the work is hard and the pay is very low.”* Fyvie and Ager (1999) observe a similar situation in Gambia, where the lack of funds for staff salaries forces local NGOs to operate with insufficient manpower. An interviewee notes that given their rather small work force, NGOs in NW Cameroon tend to avoid advocacy and lobbying activities, which require particular skills. Additionally, when these associations do engage in campaigns that aim to change state policy, the small work force limits both the strength and the geographic scope of their advocacy actions.

5.3 NORMATIVE CONSTRAINTS TO BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE

Government and donor regulatory structures produce constraining effects on bottom-up pressure through coercive means, such as, threats of withholding funding from associations. On their part, normative structures – established societal values, practices and perceptions – predominantly exert influence on associations through socialization and mimetic processes. The gravest normative constraint to bottom-up pressure in Cameroon is the widespread practice of using CSOs as a means to quick self-enrichment. Many so-called development associations emerge not because of the host of development problems that need to be addressed, but because of the prospect of gaining access to donor funds. An NGO worker in the Menchum Division of NW Cameroon gives an example:

the Ministry of Social Affairs once launched a program to support development associations with funds. Many common initiative groups changed their status to development associations in order to get the funds.

The motivating factor behind the formation of associations is a very important determinant of whether or not these associations would contribute in the struggle for good governance. As Edwards and Hulme (1996) have noted, increased availability of donor funding is a principal contributing factor to the explosion of association numbers in developing countries. NGO misappropriation of donor funds which went unchecked in the 1990s in Cameroon played a strong role in undermining ethical practices among CSOs in Cameroon.

The expected watchdog role which associations in Cameroon could exercise has diminished with the decay of ethical values among associations:

the founders of CSOs are very rich; they own big houses. Nowadays, they avoid buying Prados⁴ because these big cars call public attention. CSOs have become even more corrupt than the government. Everyone wants to own an association; everyone wants donor funds (Interview with NGO Fieldworker, 2009).

In 1998 and 1999, the corruption perception index of the German NGO *Transparency International* identified Cameroon as the world's most corrupt country. A Divisional Officer in the NW Region explains that associations have failed to decry government

⁴ Model name for the Toyota Land Cruiser

corruption, and through misappropriation of donor funds, they have “*contributed in giving Cameroon the corrupt country image.*” As several interviewees highlight, many associations in the NW Region receive donor funds, but do not execute the projects for which the resources were intended. In addition, NGOs in Cameroon have been used for carrying out international, as well as well as in-country scamming.

The NGO, *FAMM-Cameroon*,⁵ for example, swindled over €381,000 (250 million FCFA) from over 3000 Cameroonians by promising employment opportunities and subsidised healthcare (Cameroon Tribune, 2008). Since the law exempts non-profit organisations from paying taxes, CSOs are also used as covers for operating profitable private businesses. Dubious and fictitious civil society organizations, the so-called suit-case NGOs, have dealt a serious blow to the reputation of development associations among local communities in Cameroon. The Coordinator of an NGO explains:

there is a stigma on CSOs. When we go to the field to work, the first thing the communities say is: ‘we hope you don’t want to fool us like the other NGOs.’

The distrust which genuine NGOs face especially in rural communities limits their effectiveness in mobilizing and organizing local groups around specific advocacy issues. Loss of credibility among the local population, however, is not exclusively an NGO problem.

The custom of politics of the belly which is deeply established among politicians in Cameroon has eroded the credibility of opposition parties. This in turn has discouraged CSOs from collaborating with the opposition to pressure for democracy, as the low score for ‘*Established links with opposition parties*’ (E) among associations in the NW region shows. For political party officials, appointment to positions of power is not looked upon as an opportunity to change policies and ensure increased service delivery to citizens. Rather, political party leaders conceive ascension to political office as an opportunity to ‘eat their share of the national cake’ and as the end of poverty for themselves, their families and kinsmen. This mentality explains why the corruption idiom, ‘*a goat must*

⁵ Fondation pour l'assistance maladie et maternité (FAMM-Cameroon)

graze in the field in which it finds itself [translated]’ has widespread appeal in the Cameroonian context. The coordinator of a NW Region association for the disabled gives an example:

When the politician [name withheld] launched his campaign...we supported him, and during elections we also went to the poll to vote for him despite all our difficulties of movement. It is over two years since he became Minister...and he has not honoured his promises to us. This is the way politicians exploit us.

Another interviewee notes that “*the main objective of politicians is not the interest of the common man; it is to get power and enrich themselves.*” Development associations in Cameroon as such view opposition political parties as mere shadows of the regime. In addition, development associations do not see opposition parties as worthy partners in the struggle for deeper democracy because the opposition is highly fragmented. In Cameroon, there are almost as many political parties as ethnic groups. According to the Cameroon Statistical Yearbook (2004; 2006), the number of registered political parties was 186 in June 2004, and by the end of 2005, the number had risen to 197. Fatton (1995) asserts that high fragmentation of political parties weakens bottom-up pressure and encourages clientelism, such that elections (even when free and fair) seldom pose a threat to the dominant elites.

The widely accepted norm that ‘politics is best left to politicians’ also contributes to the low collaboration between associations and the opposition in NW Cameroon. A CSO worker explains how this ‘professionalization of politics norm’ hinders associations-opposition party alliances:

in Cameroon, politics is professionalized – it is seen as a profession: when CSOs bring up a good political idea, parliamentarians cannot welcome it, because they see CSOs as intruding into their field.

A member of the CSO, *Cameroon Alliance of Voluntary Organisations for Development* (CAVOD) elucidates further:

CAVOD organized a program to talk on the Constitution amendment, elections and stolen public funds. We invited parliamentarians of all political parties, to dialogue with them and find a way forward. But only one parliamentarian and the leader of the Social Democratic Front came.

Rarely do associations in NW Cameroon make proactive attempts, as CAVOD did, to engage with political parties. Remaining apolitical is a creed among associations. The vast

majority of development associations avoid involvement in partisan politics, because of an enduring enemy relationship that exists between the ruling party (CPDM) and the most prominent opposition party (SDF). As explained in the previous chapter, multiparty politics was introduced in Cameroon under great duress in 1990. Since this time, partisan politics has remained an issue of rancor and discord between leaders, ethnic groups and even people within the same community. Politics in the Cameroonian context still revolves around personalities and regional or ethnic competition for resource, rather than around ideologies. Although multiparty politics was introduced in Cameroon since 1990 (twenty years ago), President Paul Biya and the leader of the main opposition party, the SDF, formally met and shook hands only recently: on December 10, 2010. Latent intolerance remains a defining feature of partisan politics in Cameroon. Pro-democracy development associations avoid aligning with opposition parties for fear that this would stir up conflicts between different people or groups within their beneficiary communities.

The impact that development associations in NW Cameroon can have in terms of promoting radical reform is low, because non-intervention in national politics gives consent to the status quo. As the Cameroonian political scientist, Hervé Emmanuel Kongo puts it, “*politics plays those who refuse to play politics*” (CRTV, 2009: Translated). The failure of associations to relate their service delivery works to national politics (regime policies and practices) leaves their development efforts emotionally dead, and devoid of the power to mobilize people for democratic change. As social movement scholars have argued, engaging in politics stirs up the emotions that are crucial for the growth of a social movement for change.

5.4 CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS TO BOTTOM-UP PRESSURE

Apart from regulations and norms, certain practices, which have become entrenched within society over time, also constrain the political capacities of development associations in NW Cameroon. In most ethnic groups across Cameroon, there is a highly institutionalized culture of respect and reverence of traditional chiefs and elites. In the NW region in

particular, chiefs are considered sacred custodians of the customs of the different tribes. For North-westerners, the authority of the chief over his subjects originates from the ancestors. Simply put, the authority of the chief is seen mystical in nature; hence must not be called to question. The government recognizes the chiefs as auxiliaries of the state administration, even though their authority is inconsistent with the liberal democracy constitution of the state. Like the colonial powers and the Ahidjo regime, the Biya regime exploits the traditional authority of chiefs to exercise control over citizens (Jua, 2002).

The reverence of chiefs and elites which is common among village development associations (VDAs), makes it easy for these elites (who are often pro-government) to discourage oppositional voices within associations. The coordinator of a CSO explains how reverence of the chief weakens the *Mankon village Cultural and Development Association* (MACUDA):

When the MACUDA executives conceive an idea, they run to the chief; and when the chief sees no benefit in it for him, he kills the initiative. MACUDA is 'castrated'. Its members have sold their minds to an individual because he is chief.

On the one hand, the Constitutions of village development associations uphold democratic values, since all executive members are selected through elections and major decisions are taken in a general assembly of members. On another hand, the reverence or authority accorded to chiefs and elites contradicts these democratic values. This controversy is evident, for example, in the Constitution of the *Mbesoh Community Development Association* which states that “*the Mbesoh people give honour and respect to their quarter heads and to the Fon...who is the supreme ruler of the village.*” Traditional chiefs receive monthly stipends from the state. Chiefs and traditional elites loyal to the ruling party, therefore, tend to use their authority to turn VDAs into mere ‘hand-clappers’ for the government. The *Ngoketunjia Development and Cultural Association* (NDECA) is a good example. Shortly after the February 2008 anti-government protests in which over 100 Cameroonians were killed, the elites of NDECA, in the name of the thirteen Chiefs of the division, sent a letter of congratulations and support to President Biya (Letter from NDECA to President Biya, 2008).

NGOs unlike village development associations are not susceptible to the influences of chiefs and elites. However, most NGOs operate as hierarchic professional organisations in which the founder or executive director has supreme powers over the employees. An NGO worker explains:

NGOs are far from participatory. In most, if not all NGOs, the project coordinator knows nothing of how finances are managed in the organisation. The founder is the almighty. In fact NGOs are run like a family business or enterprise.

In the NW Region, most NGOs are run as ‘the private property’ of the founding members who remain at the head of the association for life. An NGO interviewee calls this “a tendency for founding members to ‘hijack’ the organization.” In 2000, squabbles over donor funds between the founding members of the development association, *Aid International Christian Women of Vision* (AIChrisWOV) led to the dissolution of the organization. Similarly, leadership conflicts have weakened the *Union of North West Human Rights Organizations* (UNOWHURO), a network of CSOs focusing on human rights. The traditional culture of the grass field people of Cameroon (North Westerners) which associates leadership with absolute power has permeated development associations, and even NGO networks, where team work and participation ought to prevail (SVN and DED, 2007). As an NGO worker explains, leadership in NW Cameroon is misconstrued as a one-way relationship: “leadership in our context is about giving orders that subordinates must take.”

Furthermore, scarcity of resources has cultivated a culture of competition, rather than one of collaboration among CSOs. As Fig. 4.9 in the previous chapter illustrates, the ‘Resource capacity’ (R) score for associations in the NW Region is below average (4.5 on 10). Given this resource deficiency, associations tend to scramble over every funding opportunity as if it were a matter of “life and death” (Interview with an NGO worker, 2009). The scramble over the EU-funded *Support Program for the Strengthening of Civil Society* (PASOC) is a good example of this culture of competition among CSOs in the North West Region. The ‘call for applications’ from organizations interested in coordinating the PASOC program in

the NW Region, triggered conflicts within the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO). As a network of development organizations, NWADO was best suited for coordinating the PASOC program. However, *INADES-Formation*, a member organisation of NWADO, actively contested for the bid and lobbied the program away from the network of which it was part. An NGO interviewee highlights that in the scramble over coordination of the PASOC program, “*lives were threatened and there was a lot of backstabbing.*” The culture of competition among CSOs is a factor that hinders networks like NWADO from working for the benefit of all its members.

Porter (2003) observes that in Ghana, a strong culture of competition among local NGOs limits information sharing which is crucial for effective networking. This is also the case in the NW region of Cameroon where “some members of networks see power as retaining information and not sharing it” (SNV and DED, 2007: 35). Organizations that are members of formal networks tend to pursue their individual interests at the expense of the interests of the network.

Given this culture of competition among CSOs, many development associations consider networking more harmful than beneficial. The coordinator of a CSO in the Bui Division of NW Cameroon explains:

I have seen other organisations grow fat on the sweat and intellect of our organisation. Many organisations have approached us for partnership and used our projects to secure funds for themselves. This is why we have given up partnering with other associations.

Such disenchantments with networking explain why formal networking between development associations in the NW Region tends to be more donor-driven than locally-driven. Development associations perceive formation of a formal CSO network organization as merely the creation of an additional competitor against whom they would have to fight for scarce funds.

Formal CSO networks also face difficulties in attracting high membership because many local associations find their membership fees and annual dues unaffordable. Table 5.1

shows the most prominent CSO networks in the NW region. The *North West Association of Development Organization* (NWADO) has 28 members and the membership fee is approximately €23 (15,000 FCFA), while the annual due is about €38 (25,000 FCFA). The *Western Highlands Nature Conservation Network* (WHINCONET) consists of 19 member organizations; and the registration fee and annual due for associations are €30 (20,000 FCFA) and €60 (40,000 FCFA) respectively.

Table 5.1: Most Prominent CSO Networks in the NW Region of Cameroon

Name of Network	Thematic Focus
North West Association of Development Organisations (NWADO)	None
The Western Highlands Nature Conservation Network (WHINCONET)	Environment and conservation
Union of North West Human Rights Organisations (UNOWHURO)	Human rights
Cameroon Alliance of Voluntary Organisations for Development	None
Platform of Actors for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS (PAFAC)	Health

Another entrenched practice among NGOs in the NW Cameroon is workshop organization: long deliberation meetings, training programs and capacity-building lectures. Among NGOs, it is standard practice to include capacity-building workshops as a component of donor-funded projects. Moreover, the practice of paying NGO workshop participants a stipend (per diem) is so widely acclaimed in the NGO circle that workshops that offer no per diem for participants draw very little attendance. In other words, among NGOs, interest in workshops has shifted from the knowledge and advocacy skills offered to the per diem. An NGO worker explains:

at the end of a training program for NGOs that I attended, participants protested that the per diem was small. They blocked the doors and held the [European] workshop organiser hostage until he increased the per diem.

Regrettably, advocacy skills that are built in NGO workshops are seldom put into action. NGOs in the NW Region are not proactive in fighting pertinent social ills like corruption and human rights abuse. As a result of their ‘silence’ on these issues, NGOs have lost

credibility and visibility within local communities. An NGO worker observes that development association networks “*look inwards most of the time: NWADO, for example, has for the meantime focused its attention on building the capacities of its members.*” The entrenched workshop culture – or more correctly, the ‘talk-shop’ and per diem culture – among NGOs has compromised both the spirit of volunteerism and the resolve to put words into practice. Workshops contribute in building solidarity among CSOs, and they also act as forums for networking. However, the contribution that development associations can make to democratization depends not on impressive rhetoric, but on their ability to put knowledge into action. Many NGO interviewees mention the absence of a role model NGO in the NW Region: an advocacy pioneer around whom other associations can rally.

5.5 RETHINKING PUTNAM: INSTITUTIONS AND THE ASSOCIATIONS-DEMOCRACY NEXUS

The above analysis of the influence of regulations, norms and cultural codes or entrenched practices on bottom-up pressure in NW Cameroon reveals that context matters – a lot. The institutional context in which associations exist affects the quality of social capital, as well as the relationship between social capital and political capital. Government and donor regulations, norms and entrenched practices in the Cameroonian context particularly constrain political capital in development associations.

A rich stock of associations in a context with constraining regulations, norms and cultural institutions will not result in associational activities that advance shared goals and hence democracy as Putnam posits. Putnam erred in “lumping social capital together with other forms of human capital” such as political capital (Edwards and Foley, 1998: 135). Whether political capital develops alongside social capital depends on the regulations, norms and codes of practice that govern the activities of associations. In order for associations to influence governance systems, they must exercise political capital. Efforts aimed at promoting participatory democracy in developing countries, must therefore not only focus on encouraging the emergence of associations. Such efforts must also support associations

to overturn those rules, norms and values that limit their maneuvering space and their ability to exercise political capital.

5.6 SUMMING UP

This chapter has explained that institutional factors namely, regulations, norms and culture constrain bottom-up pressure in Cameroon, predominantly by acting as checks to political activity in associations. Although institutions affect civil society associations, these associations are not entirely at the ‘mercy’ of institution. Institutions are relatively stable, but they are not immune to change: civil society organisations can change institutions. As Walzer (2002: 43) notes, the relationship between civil society and the state, for example, is two-way:

No significant move towards greater equality has ever been made without state action, but states do not act in egalitarian ways unless they are pressed to do so by mobilizations that can take place only in civil society....

This two-way relationship is seldom acknowledged in analysis: the relationship between institutions and civil society is often the subject of ‘chicken first-egg first’ debates. That is, while some researchers put emphasis on how institutions can enable or constrain associations, others focus on how the actions of associations can transform institutions. To avoid bias, analysis of how institutions in NW Cameroon constrain the pressure capacities of CSOs needs to be balanced with analysis of how these organizations attempt to change their institutional context. The latter is the subject of the next chapter.

6

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY: HOW CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN AFRICA CAN FOSTER GOOD GOVERNANCE

ABSTRACT

In international development, there is a strong interest in civil society organizations (CSOs) because these organizations have the potential to promote democratic governance and efficiency in service delivery. In the African context, however, *institutions* – namely norms, values and regulations – often constrain the extent to which local civic associations exercise this democracy promotion attribute. How can associations in Africa break institutional constraints and play a greater role in advancing democracy and equality in development? The answer to this question is of great interest to non-governmental organizations and international donors that clamour for a deepening of democracy in Africa. This chapter attempts to address the question, first by reviewing theoretical debates on the processes and requirement for effectuating institutional change; and second, by analyzing promising good governance promotion interventions observed among CSOs in the North West Region of Cameroon. I argue that CSOs in Africa are more likely to break institutional constraints and advance democracy when they actively replicate those interventions that have yielded results in their given contexts; and when they make their advocacy efforts *consistent or continuous* over a period of time, rather than *intermittent or discontinuous*.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Associations can play a significant role in promoting democracy. However, a “vibrant associational life” (Putnam, 1993) or the existence of a high number of community associations, however, does not automatically translate into actions that advance the quality of democracy in a particular setting. As the previous chapter highlights, the

existing institutional context (norms, values and regulations) can have a strong tapering effect on the ability of civic associations to act as promoters of democratic values. Constraining institutional environments explain why there is a democracy hold-up in African countries like Cameroon, despite an abundance of development-oriented civic associations. Actors who share the mission of advancing democracy in Africa are interested in knowledge on how the institutional context can constrain civic association pressure for democratic governance. They are even more interested in understanding which windows of opportunity for change exist and how associations in Africa can exploit them in order to play a greater role in democratic change. As earlier mentioned, although institutions influence associations, civic associations in return can change the institutions in which they are embedded. Hollingsworth (2000: 600) aptly notes that:

building of new institutions and redressing the decline of...important institutions of our societies are among the most important problems of our time.

‘How to effect institutional change’ is a challenging issue for both practitioners and researchers worldwide, because existing institutions are characterized by stability or persistence.

There are two underlying reasons for the stability of institutions. First, the rules, norms, and cultural values that structure meaning and action within a group of people or society often have long historical roots. Established organizational systems therefore tend to endure because, over time, the rules, values or norms which uphold them become taken for granted; and so go unquestioned (Scott, 2001). Secondly, North (1990a) argues that institutional change depends on power, and as long as powerful actors profit in a given context, they tend to hold institutions in place, even when the political system is inefficient. In different words, when a particular social order becomes established, it selectively constrains actions that challenge it, and enables those actions that reproduce or reinforce it. Institutions are thus described as being path-dependent in nature, where policies’ or practices work like centripetal forces to keep change around the status quo (Wilsford, 1994).

In the previous chapter, institutional analysis is used to explain how contextual factors constrain pressure for democracy among associations in the North West (NW) Region of Cameroon. While institutional analysis adequately uncovers the reasons behind the persistence of non-inclusive forms of governance, it does not provide a good basis for hypothesizing about change. This is the main shortcoming of the institutional approach. Despite this shortcoming, institutional analysis does provide some useful clues about the qualities that change-oriented endeavours should have. As Lindner (2003) points out, it is by scrutinizing the conditions and processes for institutional stability that we can begin to understand the possibilities and requirements for change.

Keohane and Martin (1995) argue that we can gain insights on how to stimulate institutional change by identifying and looking closely at any positive changes that take place in a given context. Actions that produce small impacts can show windows of opportunity for change within the political system. By building on these windows of opportunity, civic associations advocating for reform can weaken those mechanisms that stall change. Societies with strong institutional barriers to democracy are, therefore, not condemned to remain as such. This chapter attempts to identify association practices and initiatives that in small ways contribute to building bottom-up pressure for democratization in Cameroon. But to adequately show how some association initiatives can be models for change efforts, it is important to first review the theoretical debate on processes of institution-building.

6.2 HOW DO INSTITUTIONS CHANGE?

A system of governance or social order changes, when given sets of complementary rules, norms and cultural perceptions that were subordinate within the group or society gain dominance. Old institutions and the new institutions that actors seek to establish are, therefore, always in a state of competition (Lanzara, 1998). For actors to succeed in bringing about change, they must question and challenge existing institutions to the extent that they discredit them and bring legitimacy to new institutions. Institutional change,

however, is not always the result of deliberate action. Change also results from unintentional processes which may be gradual or abrupt. Given that the focus of this study is *pressure* for democratization, it makes sense to concentrate on intentional actions of institution building. Even though in reality, change results from a mix of intentional and unintentional process, the major driving forces behind change are “the deliberate attempts of...actors to craft new rules” (Kingston and Caballero, 2009: 153).

There are different schools of thought on how institutional change comes about. Stephen Krasner (1984) asserts that since institutions are characterised by considerable inertia, crises or conflicts are important factors that trigger institutional change. Such crises can be endogenous or exogenous, and may include social movements, depression, war, international pressure, and so forth. Crises open up opportunities for change through a variety of process such as: through giving certain ideas more resonance within society; creating shifts in resources/power; and reducing the risks associated with transition. In this view, change is discontinuous or episodic. Borrowing terminology from Biology, Krasner (ibid: 242) argues that institutional change occurs through a process of “punctuated equilibrium.” According to him, institutional change occurs when crises disrupt the longstanding institutional order and replaces it with a new order, which itself becomes entrenched and stable over time.

The second school of thought on institutional change criticizes the emphasis on disruptive events championed in episodic conceptualizations of institutional change. North (1993: 64) contends that “the process of change is overwhelmingly incremental” and path-dependent, rather than revolutionary in nature. According to this view, existing institutions set barriers to reform; hence change predominantly occurs through gradual adjustments of status quo norms, rules and values. Change results when actors who seek to increase their advantages within a given polity, learn from experience and invest in beneficial strategies that slowly erode the elements responsible for institutional stasis (North, 1990b). In this sense, success in transforming institutions depends on gaining bargaining power in ongoing interactions. The risks and costs associated with crises (or revolutionary change actions) are often so

high that most actors who seek change refrain from disruptive strategies. Incremental change which occurs through the *diffusion* and assimilation of new practices, norms or values in society (Clemens and Cook, 1999) is often 'safer'. The rate of change of a system of governance would, therefore, depend on the rate of diffusion and adoption of such new institutions. Revolutionary institutional change and incremental institutional change are not necessary disconnected. Some researchers advance that revolutionary changes are likely the products of accumulated incremental institutional changes (Campbell, 2004).

For any action or event to produce institutional change – whether revolutionary or incremental – it must break the reproduction cycle of existing institutions. The two perspectives on institutional change discussed above explain the sources of reform, namely, crises/conflict and gradual gains in bargaining power. However, they do not explicitly state the mechanisms through which actors or events break the cycles of stability of existing institutions. As Gorges (2001) notes, theories on institutional change tend to be vague on the causal processes that connect particular kinds of events or actions to the potential or desired change. The fuzziness of institutional change arguments limits their utility or applicability to particular situations, for example, in exploring how civil society associations can foster democracy. Given their inattention to mechanisms, Campbell (2004: v) states that these concepts of institutional change “resemble mysterious black boxes whose arguments need to be unpacked and examined.”

Lanzara (1998) sheds some light on both the *prerequisites* for institutional change and the *mechanisms* through which they produce effect. He argues that four factors are indispensable for institution-building efforts to succeed in bringing about change. First, actors pushing for change need to acquire competencies and resources to serve their institution-building purposes. Without skills and resources, change efforts would be lame. Second, common interest must prevail over the self-interests of the parties who want to effect change, because pursuing individual interest is destructive to institution-building efforts. A third requirement is the forging of a collective identity. Lanzara (ibid: 16)

argues that “institutions cannot be built if collective identities do not emerge.” As an increasing number of people adhere to the new or desired identity, old ways lose legitimacy. Fourth, promoters of reform need to win trust and confidence for the new institutions, so that people can adhere to them long enough for these new values, norms and rules to become consolidated.

According to Lanzara (ibid), actors engaged in institution building can achieve the above requirements through three mechanisms. These are (i) creation of focal points, (ii) positive feedback processes, and (iii) *bricolage* (patchwork). A focal point is a centre of coordination, and it could be a leader or a committed group. The focal point provides orientation to other actors, and reduces controversies and self-interests by espousing a vision of change for collective good. Focal points thus serve as “an ‘anchor’ for establishing identities, meanings and mutual recognitions, a ground upon which trust and competencies can be built, and a focus for mobilizing increasingly large amounts of resources (Lanzara, 1998: 23).”

Feedback processes on their part enable actors to learn from experiences, and to develop or devise new strategies that are suited for their given context. Apart from encouraging innovation, feedback processes promote the “adoption and diffusion of institutional solutions” (ibid: 20). The third mechanism, *bricolage* (patchwork) stands for the process of constructing large structures of change out of the small ones that are available. Since institutional building requires considerable resources, competencies and trust, constructing a large advocacy for reform from scratch is difficult in most settings. Change comes about more readily when actors use existing successful strategies and networks as “inspiration” for large institutional overhaul (Offe, 1996).

Bearing in mind these mechanisms that enable institutional change, the task of action-research is to identify which type of practices among African associations actually succeed in challenging the institutional barriers to bottom-up pressure discussed in the previous chapter. Analyzing how small initiatives carried out by civil society associations actually

contribute to institutional change is relevant for two reasons. First, it will help us understand how specific actions of associations are causally linked to specific changes in those norms, values and regulatory structures that constrain the deepening of democracy in Africa. Second, it will show how associations in a typical African setting can build on *local* success stories to promote democracy. Recommendations for change that stem from local experiences would avoid the pitfalls of prescribing practices and expectations from Europe on local African associations. Policy recommendations that are inspired by local experiences and which give due consideration to the Africa context are more likely to produce better results than recommendations based on experiences from other cultures.

6.3 CSO INITIATIVES THAT PROMOTE CHANGE IN CAMEROON

In spite of their shortcomings (discussed in the previous chapter), associations in NW Cameroon have scored some successes in building qualities that enhance their role as promoters of democracy and equal development. Some successes can be observed in efforts aimed at:

- a) Rebuilding the image of CSOs;
- b) Promoting networking;
- c) Increasing resource capacities;
- d) Enhancing community participation;
- e) Advocating for justice and accountability; and
- f) Facilitating information dissemination.

The sections below describe these small efforts in detail, to show how they can be the springboard for greater institutional change. Borrowing Lanzara's terminology, these small successful strategies could be – on an optimistic note – the building blocks of institutional *bricolage* for large scale reform in the system governance.

6.3.1 Rebuilding the Image of Civil Society Organisations

For development associations to make demands for greater accountability, transparency and participation in the management of the state, they need to uphold these qualities

themselves. In Cameroon, many development associations fail to demonstrate these values. NGOs in particular are known to be implicated in scamming, government corruption, tax fraud and embezzlement of donor funds. An NGO Coordinator claims that as many as forty percent of NGOs in the NW region of Cameroon are fraudulent (Personal Interview, 2009). CSOs have lost credibility in the eyes of the government, donors and most of all, the local communities. However, there are a number of NGO initiatives that try to reform the image of CSOs within the society.

As a case in point, the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) in December 2008 proposed a *Code of Ethics* for civil society organizations. The code of Ethics was developed from the deliberations of a consortium of CSOs from the North West and West Regions of Cameroon. The Code of Ethics outlines standards which all signatory associations are to abide by. It champions values like the promotion of human rights, transparency, accountability, social justice, gender balance, peace, equality, stakeholder participation, to name a few. Moreover, it states that CSOs should not be self-serving, but should instead provide development stakeholders with full information on their activities and management of funds. After developing the Code of Ethics, NWADO laid out plans to organize discussion workshops on the code in all the ten regions of the country. The intended purpose of the workshops was to distribute the Code of Ethics document to associations throughout the national territory, and to gather feedback which would help in finalizing the self-regulatory tool. Through such a participatory process, NWADO hoped to encourage development associations throughout the country to adopt or support the code, and by so doing, participate in a movement for building the credibility of CSOs. As an interviewee notes, NWADO is succeeding in winning national support for the initiative because “*the code is a bilingual document*”, developed by representatives of civil society associations from both the French part and the English part of the country.

The last phase of the Code of Ethics initiative involves the creation of a regulatory organ – an ethics committee composed of CSO representatives – which will pressure signatory associations to respect the values in the code. The Code of Ethics initiative also involves

the development of a quality assurance system: a set of criteria for classifying and issuing different kinds of certificates to associations based on the degree to which they abide by the good governance norms prescribed in the Code of Ethics. Regular publication of the names of associations that voluntarily appropriate the code is expected to help in discrediting dubious and fictitious associations in the eyes of communities and donors. The more the Code of Ethics gains support among CSOs, the more it can contribute in ostracizing government-created associations that pose as members of the civil society community. Though still in its infancy, the Code of Ethics initiative holds some promise for reforming the collective identity of development associations around the principles of good governance.

Some development associations in NW Cameroon use sterner measures to rid the civil society of fraudulent associations. In 2008, the NW branch of *Responsible Citizen (Dynamique Citoyenne)*, a network of development associations, filed a lawsuit against the director of the NGO, FAMM-Cameroon⁶. The law suit included complains from over 250 people who had been scammed by FAMM-Cameroon. The organization FAMM-Cameroon had swindled money from citizens by promising employment and access to subsidized healthcare (Cameroon Tribune, 2008). The case filed by the network of CSOs against FAMM-Cameroon sent out a strong signal that NGO malpractices would not go unpunished. Such measures, if replicated, can contribute in building a tradition of ‘whistle blowing’ among civil society organizations. The CSO communities in African countries stand a greater chance of gaining public trust – an important requirement for institutional change – if they put a system in place for investigating suspected cases of NGO fraud.

Donors working in Cameroon are also playing a role in fighting corruption among development associations by demanding more elaborate accountability reports on implemented projects. To decide whether or not to support an association with resources, some donors request for a history of activities that the association has carried out. Other donors ask for references from credible partners working in the country, who can ascertain

⁶ *Fondation pour l'assistance maladie et maternité*

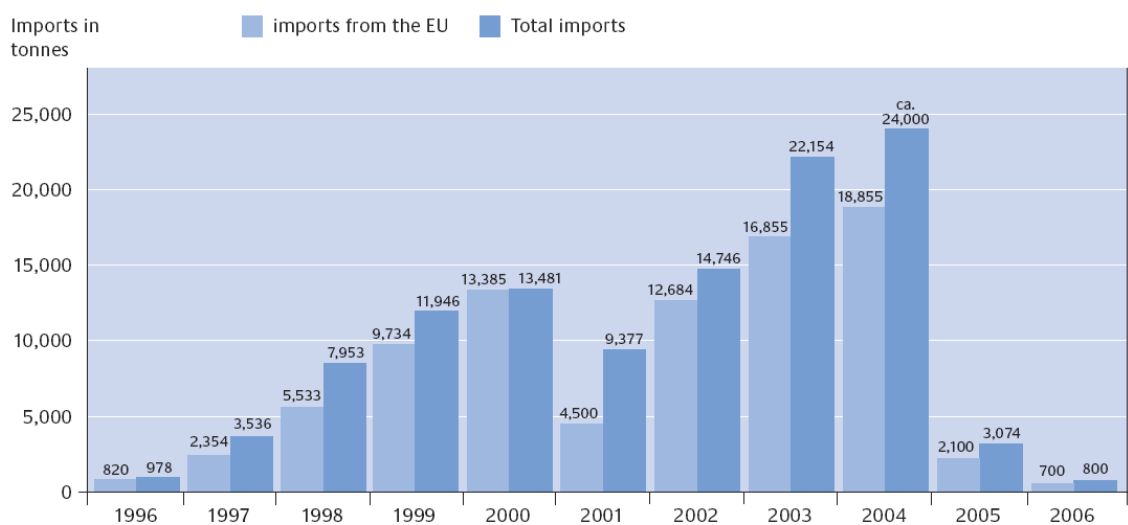
the reputation of the association that is applying for funding. Progressively, donor organizations are adopting the practice of funding projects in phases, instead of disbursing funds to local CSOs in a single instalment. In other words, donors disburse funds to associations for execution of the second phase of a project only when they have received detailed reports which justify how funds were used in the first phase. NGO workers in NW Cameroon point out that on the one hand, the paperwork involved in detailed funding justifications to donors slows down their activities, especially given their problems of manpower shortage. However, they recognize that these more stringent follow-up or accountability measures on the part of donors help to curtail embezzlement of fund among CSOs; hence it helps to put fraudulent associations ‘out of business’. In the words of an interviewee, reinforcing such accountability measures will contribute to a great extent in “*phasing out those associations that are not active*” in the field. Getting rid of fraudulent associations can opens up opportunities for genuine development associations to spread good governance norms within the civil society.

The diversion of donor funds into private pockets which has soiled the credibility of CSOs in Cameroon seldom takes place when development projects are implemented by groups of associations or networks. Projects implemented within networks invariably command greater involvement and participation of different associations. Network-managed projects therefore tend to be more transparent. In development projects run by networks of associations, the individual associations monitor each other. Donors can therefore contribute in promoting good governance within the civil society by directing more funds towards network-run projects rather than towards projects run by single associations.

Interviews show that development associations can further build their credibility and gain popular support when they shift their focus to issues that have wide societal relevance. For example, in 2003 the *Citizens Association for the Defence of Collective Interests* (ACDIC) mobilized associations and poultry farmers in Cameroon for a campaign against importation of frozen chicken. The exportation of low-priced chicken from Europe to Cameroon had driven many local poultry farmers out of business and pushed them into

poverty. Additionally, given that the imported frozen chicken was maintained under sub-standard refrigeration and hygienic conditions, it posed serious health risks to consumers throughout the country. In 2004, ACDIC activists organized workshops with government officials, and carried out public sensitization campaigns on what they dubbed “the chicken of death.” The frozen chicken campaign enjoyed support from poultry farmers, the local population, and the media, because the problems it sought to address concerned a large fraction of the population. In 2005, the campaign produced results: the government introduced a ban on the importation of frozen chicken (Fig. 6.1). Frozen chicken imports dropped from 24,000 tons to 2,100 tons in 2005. Following the stop of frozen chicken ‘dumping’ on local markets, the demand for locally produced chicken increased and farmers began to reinvest in poultry farming.

Fig. 6.1: Imports of Frozen Chicken to Cameroon (1996 to 2006)



(Source: EED et al, 2007)

The frozen chicken problem was a topical issue that affected the lives of many people. By confronting government with the issue, NGOs *proved* themselves as the mouthpiece of the voiceless. Instead of just restricting their efforts to addressing the consequences of poverty, the NGOs focused on one of the root causes, which was of concern to the wider society. This success story demonstrates that addressing problems that affect the lives of a large fraction of the population is important if local associations hope to gain local recognition

and support. A member of the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) explains how the CSO networks can gain public support and negotiation power vis-à-vis the state:

what will make NWADO known is the ability to stand up and defend something that affects everyone. When we do this, the government will call us for negotiation because they would know that we have the backing of the people; and that we represent power.

The example of the frozen chicken campaign shows that development associations gain greater legitimacy for spearheading policy advocacy when they take up topical issues that go beyond narrow interest.

To illustrate further, in 2007, NGOs in NW Cameroon for the first in history, carried out a project to promote transparency in the municipal elections. The association, *Community Initiative for Sustainable Development* (COMINSUD) which had received funding to run a project on election observation decided to execute the project in collaboration with other CSOs. COMINSUD placed the project on the platform of a national CSO network called *Responsible Citizen* (*Dynamique Citoyenne*). As part of the project, NGOs trained eighty-nine people (animators) to work as election observers at different voting centers in the region. Prior to the election, the animators carried out sensitization campaigns to fight apathy and also urged District Officers to resolve problems that citizens faced in the registration process. An interviewee argues that NGO participation in monitoring and reporting on the election process reduced fraud and other irregularities which are common with elections in Cameroon. By advocating for an issue like electoral transparency which mattered to citizens throughout the country, COMINSUD and the other associations involved in the initiative gained public recognition and hence credibility. A COMINSUD worker states:

we are known today in almost all regions of the country. We are invited to many activities in other regions because we are recognized as [true] advocates of democracy and human rights.

Mercer (2002) and others have noted that typically, NGOs and grassroots associations have a close relationship with local communities and are more informed about the

problems which these communities face. To fight inequality, these associations often focus attention on problems at the local level. Although this ‘local level focus’ of civil society associations is often regarded as positive, it also has a disadvantage. The development problems that are experienced at the local level are often the result of poorly designed policies at the national level. Jasanoff (1997) argues that when associations focus on local level issues they are less likely to bring about radical policy change. As individual association work on small projects in their respective small corners, their campaigns end at the local level, and fail to gain visibility, which is crucial for building credibility. COMINSUD magnified and brought visibility to the election observation initiative described above because the issue it addressed was not a local but a national concern. The ability to gain visibility through a focus on national policy issues or issues of wide societal relevance depends on successful networking.

6.3.2 Overriding Challenges to Networking

According to interviewees, networking among development associations in Cameroon is at its best in the NW Region. Quantitative data (Fig. 4.9 in Chapter 4) shows that on a 0 to 10 scale, the average score for ‘*organization and networking*’ (O) among CSOs in the NW Region is 6. This score is only slightly above average. This implies that as far as networking to mount pressure on government is concerned, civil society associations in Cameroon still have a lot of ground to cover. The networking experiences of associations in the NW region provide some clues as to how networking can be enhanced.

One of the greatest challenges to successful networking is competition between organizations within a network. In the NW region of Cameroon there are many formal networks of CSOs and among these, the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) is the most prominent. By learning from experience, the NWADO members have achieved some success in reducing destructive competition within the network. Conflict among member organizations was reduced first by employing

an independent coordinator to manage the activities of the network, and secondly, by renting a separate office for the network's secretariat.

Resource scarcity, a common feature among development associations in NW Cameroon poses a challenge to the survival of CSO networks. To survive in a situation of scarce resources, networks rely heavily on support from their member associations. Usually, one member organization provides space at its office for the network secretariat, and other member organizations volunteer their staff to run some of the activities of the network. For example, the CSO, *Community Initiative for Sustainable Development* (COMINSUD) hosted the NWADO secretariat for some time. This kind of support which is indispensable for the growth of young network has also been a major source of conflict that threatens the survival of the network.

According to NGO interviewees, the association hosting the secretariat of a CSO network often tends to dictate in the management of the network, as such stirring up disenchantment among the members of the network. Conflicts have also arisen in networks because associations which host the secretariats of the network typically assimilate the activities of the network into their own activities, and end up draining resources from the network. Furthermore, the host associations charged with coordinating the activities of CSO networks are known to discriminate in the way information about financial resources is circulated. Such discrimination has been the root cause of factions within networks. Additionally, CSO networks in NW Cameroon often become dormant because member organizations commit very little manpower for running the activities of the network. Most networks, therefore, fail to act with continuity. For example, the *Union of North West Human Rights Organizations* (UNOWHURO) becomes active when it gains access to resources to execute a project. And after the project is completed, the network, as a result of lack of manpower, again becomes inactive. If civil society organizations are to succeed in bringing about institutional change through pressure, they need to ensure continuity in their activities. Also, for CSO networks to attract new members and grow in numbers and influence, they need to remain active.

The successes achieved by the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) give some clues as to how development associations can override the network challenges discussed above. The NWADO members resolved conflict in management of the network by recruiting a full-time coordinator who was not affiliated to any of the member organizations. The paid coordinator showed commitment to the network. The resultant success in the management and implementation of the network's projects attracted more CSOs to become members. In 2007 NWADO had 15 registered members, and by August 2009, the membership had almost doubled. As the coordinator was not affiliated with any of the member organizations of the network, he ensured that information was circulated to all members equally without preferential treatment. The recruitment of an independent coordinator, who does not belong to any of the member organizations therefore, significantly reduced conflicts of interest, and enhanced harmony within the network. Additionally, with support from international donors, the NWADO members rented an office for the NWADO secretariat. This freed the network from any obligations to a particular member, and gave the coordinator more autonomy to manage the network with impartiality.

The recruitment of an independent coordinator clearly helped NWADO reduce the problem of conflict that plagues most CSO networks in NW Cameroon, but it also created a new problem. The members of the network shifted almost all management responsibilities to the coordinator. This made the network fragile, as activities were liable to stop or slow down in the absence of the coordinator (SNV and DED, 2007). To help address this manpower problem, the NWADO coordinator recruited two national volunteers. NWADO also established a partnership with the international organization *Volunteer Services Overseas* (VSO), which sent skilled volunteers to provide technical assistance to the network. Eventually, the network secured financial support from VSO to provide financial compensation to the two national volunteers.

As is the case for other CSO networks in the NW Region of Cameroon, shortage of financial resources is a major constraint to the growth and vibrancy of NWADO. CSO networks face the dilemma of either instituting low membership fees to attract more members, or instituting high fees so that the network can have enough financial resources for its operation costs. On the one hand, networks would like to attract higher membership by decreasing their annual dues. The *Western Highlands Conservation Network* (WHICONET), for example decreased its annual dues from 50,000 to 40,000 FCFA – approximately from €76 to €61 (SNV and DED, 2007). But without resources, networks risk stagnation. When annual dues are substantial, networks can continue to pay their operational costs when they are low on resources from donor-funded projects. High annual dues, however, prevent small and low-resourced associations from joining CSO networks. NWADO, for example with its 28 members, can be described as a ‘high-class’ or ‘bourgeois’ network because ninety percent of its members are well established organizations which receive considerable funding from foreign donors. Since NWADO has succeeded in gaining recognition as the focal point of CSOs in the North West region of Cameroon, being a member of the network is appealing to many smaller development associations in the region. However, very few of these smaller lower-income community associations are able and willing to pay the membership fees. An NGO worker points out that although the registration fee and annual dues act as a disincentive for smaller associations to join networks, these fees are important because paying them stimulates commitment to the CSO network.

Even when associations pay registration fees and join networks, not all of them readily pay the annual dues which the network needs for its operation costs. For example, although most NWADO member organizations are quite well-off financially, by the month of April, only half of them had paid their annual dues in 2009. Networking is not a purely altruistic endeavor, although it is often regarded as such. The readiness with which associations join network or show commitment to networks depends on the benefits they can draw from being members. These benefits can be material, such as greater accesses to donor funding. They can be symbolic, for instance, greater visibility and recognition in society. Benefits

can also be in the form of access to better information on sources of funding or on intervention strategies that work. Therefore, for a network to keep its members devoted, or attract other associations to join, it needs to demonstrate that it has these benefits to offer. The experience of NWADO provides some clues as to how networks can motivate members to pay their dues. Before submitting an application for a big donor-funded project, the NWADO coordinator in May 2009 informed the network's members that only associations that had paid their annual dues would be allowed to participate in executing the project. Shortly after receiving this information, many member organizations rushed to pay or complete their annual dues.

To attract development associations in NW Cameroon to become members of the network, NWADO launched a quarterly newsletter in 2009. The newsletter was a 'marketing' strategy. It contained information about the activities of the network, as well as the success stories or achievements of its member organizations. The newsletter was distributed for free to local associations and donors, as such, giving visibility to both the network and its members. Increasing membership is one of NWADO's main objectives. So far, the members of CSO networks in NW Cameroon are mostly formal and professionalized associations like NGOs, even though the region is teeming with community-based organizations. As an interviewee notes, for a network like NWADO to be truly representative of the civil society, it "*needs to include all types of civil society associations, such as village development associations (VDAs) and churches*", as well as community groups.

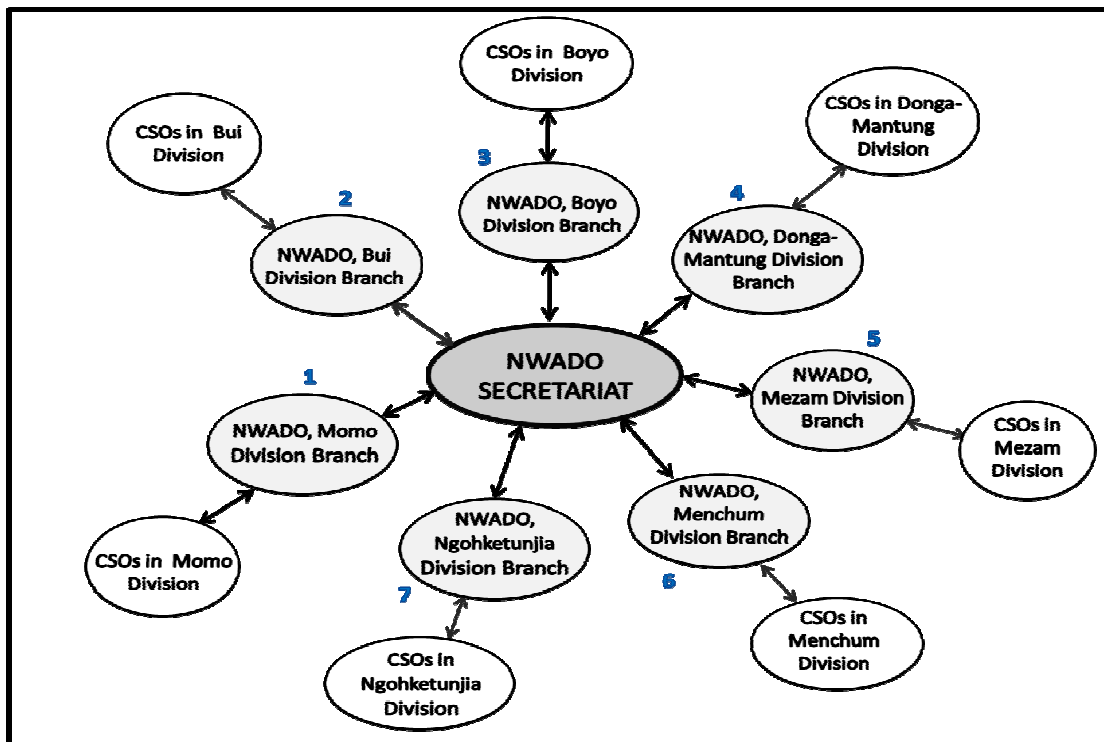
Some village development organizations in NW Cameroon have organized themselves into networks. An example is the *Ngoketunjia Development and Cultural Association* (NDECA), a network of the 13 village development associations within the Ngoketunjia Division in NW Cameroon. Another example is the *Wimbum Cultural and Development Association* (WICUDA), a network of 32 village development associations of the Mbum ethnic group. The networks of village development association (VDAs) are tribal-based and often represent the interests of a specific group of people. Granovetter (1973) argues

that in networking, tight ties break society into cliques, while cross-cutting ties link different groups or classes of people. Social fragmentation – such ethnic-based networking can be destructive to democracy. VDA networks are, therefore, not a suitable model for democracy-friendly networking in the NW region of Cameroon because they lay emphasis on ethnic identities. The *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) is a more suitable model for broad-based networking, because it can include different groups that share the vision of promoting democracy and equality in the country.

Given that the NWADO secretariat is based in Bamenda, the capital of the NW region, which is located in the Mezam Division, the activities of the network are often limited to the headquarter Division. For this reason NWADO can be described as centralized. Only occasionally does the network run capacity-building programs in the other six divisions of the region. The relative ‘absence’ of NWADO in, for example, the Bui Division has prompted associations in this division to form a divisional network of CSOs called the *Bui Association of Development Organizations* (BADO). On the one hand, the creation of a divisional network of CSOs is a laudable initiative. However, when all divisions create their own networks, problems of linking or networking the various divisional networks is bound to arise. In other words, there will be conflicts of interests and problems of coordination between NWADO and the divisional networks, which may want to be independent.

An NGO worker therefore argues that a better model for successful networking is for NWADO to create sub-branches in the seven divisions (Bui, Boyo, Donga-Mantung, Mezam, Menchum, Ngoketunjia and Momo) of the NW region (Fig. 6.2). Based on its experience with networking, the NWADO secretariat can then build the capacities of the sub-branches, which would then act as the focal points of the network in the respective divisions.

Fig. 6.2: A Networking Model for the North West Association of Development Organizations (NWADO)



This radial model of networking holds three main advantages. First, the model can expand the geographic reach of NWADO by connecting NWADO to emerging network initiatives in different divisions of the region. Second, with the roles and powers of the branches and central secretariat clearly elaborated, the model can forestall conflicts or competition between NWADO and emerging divisional networks. Third, such a radial system of networking is suitable for a more structured two-way flow of information between associations in the region, with the NWADO secretariat acting as the central coordination body.

Associations working for the interest of the Mbororo (one of the most marginalized groups in Cameroon) employed this networking model to organize their interventions under one body. Before 1992, there were three associations in Cameroon that focused on fighting marginalization of the Mbororo, a cattle-rearing Islamic people. Two of these associations were based in the towns of Bamenda and Kumbo of the NW region and one was based in

Yaounde in the Centre Region. The literacy rate among the Mbororo at this time was less than 4%, (*Interview with an NGO worker, 2009*). Government officials and other people in positions of power took advantage of the Mbororo people's low levels of education to victimize them in various ways. The three associations advocating for the rights of the Mbororo realized that independently, their voices were weak. In 1999, they came together under one identity and name: the *Mbororo Social and Cultural and Development Organization* (MBOSCUDA). Jointly, they drafted the vision, objectives, and constitution of the new umbrella structure. The three associations in the three different towns thus began to operate as branches of one association, that is: MBOSCUDA Bamenda Branch, MBOSCUDA Kumbo Branch and MBOSCUDA Yaounde Branch. This networking enhanced information sharing, mutual support, and visibility of the associations. In short, networking gave more clout to the advocacy actions of the three associations.

Although the radial model of networking has merits, putting it into practice in the case of NWADO, would require considerable amount of resources, because self-interest characterizes the interaction between CSOs in NW Cameroon. Donors can encourage the emergence of such a broad-based networking model by giving priority to development project run by networks over those executed by single associations. Associations, especially NGOs follow resources: their priorities shift in accordance with donor priorities (Howell, 2000). By tilting their funding towards networks, donors would give associations a powerful incentive to work in collaboration. Furthermore, a long-lasting solution to the problem of competition which hampers effective networking lies in laying down guiding principles on how the networks should function. As an NGO worker points out, clear guiding principles would ensure that "*resources meant for networks go to networks and resources meant for member organizations go to member organizations*". Such principles would avoid, scrambles between a network and its member organizations over donor funded projects; as was the cases in 2008 between NWADO and one of its member organization over the EU-funded *Support Programme for the Strengthening of Civil Society* (PASOC).

6.3.3 Increasing Resource Capacity

Resources are the lifeblood of civil society associations. As several NGO informants point out, the level of resources (R) affects the extent to which associations can develop the other bottom-pressure attributes of the POWER framework. An interviewee notes:

If you have the resources, you can work for policy change; you can organize yourself well and work within a network; you can integrate well with your target group; and you can establish links which would not put you in danger of being co-opted by this or that political party.

The low level of ‘*politicization activities*’ (P) observed among associations in NW Cameroon is a reflection of their inadequate access to resources. Many CSOs in the case study are described as “*ghost associations*” because they exist in name and do not pursue their visions and objectives in practice due to inadequate resources. Shortage of resources has forced many associations to divert from addressing local problems which they find pertinent. In the words of an NGO worker, resource deficiency “*has given room for the funders to tie a rope around the necks of associations; CSOs are forced to dance according to the dictates of the donor, instead of facing the realities in the field.*” For associations to succeed in bringing about institutional change, increasing their resource capacity is vital.

Associations in NW Cameroon use a number of strategies to build their resource capacity. Some associations operate businesses to raise funds which can sustain their activities when there are no resources from donors. NWADO, for example, runs a photocopying and printing service. The organization, *Navti Foundation* generates income through its community clinic, tailoring workshop, and computer training centre. According to an interviewee, income from these three services would have been sufficient to sustain the organization, if there wasn’t gross mismanagement on the part of the association’s leaders. The *Navti Foundation* case indicates that associations can reduce or break out of their dependence on donors by investing in income-generating activities, especially as non-profit associations are not required by law to pay taxes. The association, *Piyin Sustainable Farming System* (PISUFAS) has focused its development activities on supporting the

income-generating activities of farmer groups in rural areas. According to the association's coordinator, the key to real empowerment is economic self-sufficiency. Economic self-sufficiency, he argues, frees people and makes it possible for them to be critical – *“to think with their heads, rather than with their stomachs.”* To put it differently, economic independence makes people and their associations less susceptible to corruption and to placation by government politicians who do not truly have their interests at heart.

Some development associations try to address the resource shortage problem by diversifying their sources of funding. The association, *Community Initiative for Sustainable Development* (COMINSUD), for example broadened its objectives from just waste management in 1996 to promoting environmental conservation, gender equality, human rights, democracy, and healthcare. Some interviewees criticize this CSO tendency of pursuing multiple goals as *“NGO prostitution”* or *“biting off more than can be chewed.”* Edwards (1999) argues that associations which pursue too many goals at the same time are less likely to achieve them because of a loss of focus. These criticisms certainly have some credit. However, they do not take into account that development is multifaceted; for example, problems of female marginalization often have import on issues of environmental management. Most importantly, the criticisms overlook the fact that diversification of objectives is a strategy which associations use to mobilize resources from a variety of sources. Having multiple sources of funding helps to ensure sustainability of NGO activities, and it also helps to guarantee some degree of independence from the different donors. A member of the development association, COMINSUD explains:

We realized we can have more resources in the organization by opening up our areas of intervention. Funding for one sector helps to solve small problems in other sectors. When we put together the funding for the different sectors, it is quite substantial.

COMINSUD has applied the same strategy of diversification in the training of its staff. Instead of building the capacities of a worker in just one sector, such as natural resources management or democracy advocacy, the association tries to develop a multi-skilled work force by rotating workers across sectors. This helps to prevent project activities from

stalling when a worker leaves the organization. For example, when the team working on governance project runs low on staff, workers from other project areas offer support. A COMINSUD interviewee notes: *“we have a coordinator who is very polyvalent; it is possible for him to backstop each project team within the organization.”*

Associations in NW Cameroon also try to increase or guarantee continuous access to donor resources by establishing long-term collaboration or agreements with funders. The advantage of long-term collaboration over project-based cooperation is that it gives associations in developing countries room to ‘sell’ their visions and objectives to donors. In project-based cooperation, the donor sends out a call for project proposals within a particular sector (for example, environmental conservation) that it deems necessary for a particular developing country. Associations then try to fit their development interests within the requirements of the call for proposal. When the problems which the call for proposals mentions are not the main problems which local communities face, development associations which need donor funding tend to appropriate the donor-identified problems. In this way, project-based cooperation maintains a patron-client relationship between associations and their donors.

Long-term funding cooperation with donors makes a shift from project funding to program funding. In program-based funding, donor funds are not tightly earmarked, and this gives local associations more flexibility to address the problems they deem more pertinent in their context. Since in long-term funding collaborations (program-based cooperation), donors commit resources to local associations over a given period of time, the sustainability and hence success of the interventions of these associations is more assured. An NGO worker states: *“long-term collaboration with donors, enables associations to plan, which makes them more focused on achieving the outputs that they desire.”*

Donors further help CSOs gain greater access to resources when, they avoid the practice of channelling financial resources to associations through the government. In Cameroon, donor funding meant for civil society projects seldom reaches target groups entirely, when

it passes through the government. Despite the government's anticorruption efforts, corruption within the state bureaucracy remains high. Many CSO interviewees mentioned projects which had come to a standstill because the government failed to disburse the funds meant for their continuation. The coordination of the association, *Positive Vision for Development* gives an example:

The Malaria Project which we had in Mbengwi abruptly came to an end. We signed a contract with the Ministry of Health, carried out the first phase of the project and submitted the report. We have been waiting for over six months now and some of our patients have died.

Interviewees argue that associations would gain greater access to resources if donors avoid the 'middleman syndrome'; that is, using the state as a channel for sending resources to CSOs. Direct collaboration between associations and donors is important because the philosophy of 'government empowerment of civil society' is self-defeating or unrealistic in practice in semi-autocratic regimes like Cameroon.

Micro-credit initiatives have also been quite significant in helping small associations break out of economic dependency. An example is the Empowerment Credit (EC) scheme of a non-governmental organization called *Grounded and Holistic Approach to People's Empowerment* (GHAPE). The empowerment credit scheme entails using funds from donors to provide small associations of underprivileged people with loans, accompanied by advice on how to invest in small and medium size enterprises. The main advantage of the scheme lies in the extremely low interest rate of the loans. When borrowers in one association repay the loan, the money is then redeployed to people in other community or common initiative groups. The interest, which is usually 10% or less is used to cover the running cost of the scheme. Microfinance initiatives of this type have produced tangible results in the form of transforming underprivileged groups from 'beggars' to entrepreneurs. Therefore, such schemes are a good strategy for strengthening CSOs economically, especially those associations in rural areas. The female empowerment program of the *Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association* (MBOSCUDA) has a micro-finance component. According to MBOSCUDA, the excessive dependence of Mbororo women on their men is the root cause of social and political marginalization of

the Mbororo woman. As a member of the organization notes, the microfinance scheme of MBOSCUDA which started in 2003 has so far “*benefited and changed the lives of about 24 women groups*” in the NW region of Cameroon. Initiatives which enable associations to gain increased access to financial resources are crucial for bottom-up pressure because having a voice in community decision-making is closely tied to economic independence and empowerment.

6.3.4 Enhancing Participation and Community Involvement

Associations can achieve greater success in building and consolidating democratic values in society, not through mere rhetoric, but through action-centered learning programs of community participation. As Pateman (1970: 31) asserts, “it is by participating at the local level that the individual ‘learns democracy’.” In other words, regular experience with participatory forms of governance helps people develop critical mindsets, and the habit of advocating for their rights. The *Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association* (MBOSCUDA) has achieved praiseworthy success in promoting participation and critical consciousness within local communities in NW Cameroon using the REFLECT⁷ approach.

REFLECT is an approach for enhancing participation that was developed from the pedagogy by practice theories of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. According to Freire (1970), liberation from oppression requires active participation of the oppressed in reflections on the causes of their oppression. Reflective participation he argues gives the oppressed self-confidence to ask ‘why’ questions about their situation (their reality), which oppressive institutional structures have forced them to accept or to refrain from questioning. Reflection, therefore, inspires the oppressed to take action or engage in struggles to overturn social, cultural, economic or political structures that are responsible for their subjugation. Freire further argues that any libertarian effort in which the oppressed themselves are not actively involved is not itself free of oppressive character. For him, “libertarian action must recognize...dependence as a weak point and must attempt

⁷ Re-generated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

through reflection and action to transform it into independence” (ibid: 66). To put it differently, only political action which is pedagogical in nature, in the sense of being “action *with* the oppressed” is truly liberating (ibid: 66).

MBOSCUDA adopted the REFLECT approach in its adult literacy program in 1999 thanks to support from the international development organization, *Village Aid*. In Mbororo communities in the NW region, the association created over 30 adult literacy groups or ‘reflect circles’ which together drew about 600 participants. The ‘reflect learning circles’ are forums in which community members gather to discuss the problems they face: the causes, consequences, potential solutions, and the challenges of implementing these solutions. In accordance with Freirean philosophy, ‘reflect learning circles’ are not run by teachers who instruct, but rather by facilitators who only guide the topics of discussion generated by the participants themselves. The REFLECT approach, therefore, gives room for local people to identify their development priorities, and to spearhead or take ownership of change efforts.

The REFLECT approach has contributed significantly in building critical consciousness among the Mbororo people. The Mbororo today, increasingly see themselves as citizens with rights, and increasingly challenge cultural and political systems of hierarchy that have for long been used with impunity to marginalize them. Furthermore, the majority of participants in the ‘reflect circles’ are women. The reflect forums have been instrumental in breaking strong gender taboos by giving women the opportunity and space to contribute their voice in community issues. MBOSCUDA’s success with REFLECT makes the approach stand out as a strategy which associations in developing countries can adopt, for building democratic values and norms from the bottom-up through praxis. Given its participatory nature, the REFLECT approach can help non-grassroots NGOs to gain greater community embeddedness.

Creating microcosms of participatory democracy at the local can gradually erode those institutions that support corruption and clientelism. To cite an example, an NGO called

Integrated Development Foundation (IDF) has contributed in fighting corruption and mismanagement within the Bamenda Council of NW Cameroon by encouraging the inhabitants of two quarters to form development committees. First, the NGO mobilized the inhabitants of each quarter to organize themselves within a formal quarter development association. With coaching from the NGO, the people themselves then drafted a constitution and an electoral code for their respective development associations. To guarantee the independence of the quarter associations, the constitutions stated that only quarter inhabitants who were not part of the state administration were eligible to hold executive posts within the quarter associations. Subsequently, using secret ballots and a transparent ballot box, each quarter association elected its committee members and trained them to collaborate with the city council. The development committee members were charged with communicating the people's development priorities to the council and with monitoring the execution of development budgets earmarked for the quarters.

This initiative which is a pilot case of the 'participatory decentralized development approach' promoted by the World Bank has yielded tangible results. In one of the quarters, the development committee influenced the council to invest in building footpaths rather than roads, since a majority of the houses in the quarter were only accessible by footpaths. In another case, the development committee wrote a complaint to the council regarding a new road which was two meters narrower than stipulated in the construction contract. Following the complaint, the council instructed the contractor to respect the terms of the contract. The quarter committees have enabled quarter inhabitants to effectively follow-up on how the council uses the funds meant for development of their district. As an interviewee notes, if the participatory initiative is replicated so that there are "*a series of quarters with development committees, the council will know it is dealing with a strong civil society and things would change.*" Also, the creation of quarter committees which can provide information about people's development priorities can help NGOs design their projects according to local priorities. In NW Cameroon, there is very little networking between professionalized associations like NGOs and village development associations (VDAs) which are more grassroots in nature. Information from quarter committees about

people's development priorities will also help NGOs avoid the costly process of carrying out broad baseline surveys to determine community priorities.

6.3.5 Advocating for Justice and Accountability

In advanced democracies, civil society advocacy strategies, such as protest marches and rallies can be quite effective in changing government policy. But in semi-authoritarian or pseudo-democratic African countries, the government typically responds to demonstrations with repression. When confronted with civil unrest, the Biya regime in Cameroon has used terror – arbitrary arrests, torture, intimidation, killings, and detention without trial – to subdue discontent. Examples abound, but the most outstanding case is the repression of protests against high costs of living and elimination of presidential term limits from the Constitution in February 2008. The government repression left at least 139 civilians dead within 5 days of demonstrations (The National Observatory of National Human Rights, 2009). Given the repressive nature of the government, associations that aim to promote democracy and equal development have turned to advocacy strategies that do not expose citizens to police or military brutalization.

To fight forms of marginalization, tyranny and injustice, while avoiding the risks of repression, many associations in Cameroon have turned to the use of the legal system. In other words, development associations have shifted the battleground for good governance from street protests to courts cases. The access to justice programme of the *Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association* (MBOSCUDA) is a good case of how associations have used the legal system to promote the respect of human rights. MBOSCUDA began its access to justice programme in 2001, as a response to the prevalent problem of harassment and human rights abuse which the Mbororo people faced. As a result to their low education, the Mbororo were defenceless against some government officials and barons, who misused administrative power to molest or exploit them. Within the access to justice programme, MBOSCUDA fights unlawful practices in three ways. First, the association assists rural Mbororo people to obtain documents like birth

certificates or national identity cards, which give them legal rights as citizens of Cameroon. According to a MBOSCUDA interviewee, *“the association has helped about 5000 people within the NW region to acquire citizenship documents.”* Second, the association organizes human rights sensitization campaigns in Mbororo communities, and encourages people to report cases of harassment or human rights abuse. Third, MBOSCUDA has trained a team of paralegal officers who gather evidence against perpetrators of human rights abuse, and also provide pro bono legal representation to victimized Mbororo people.

MBOSCUDA has a database where it records all the cases of abuse or exploitation that it has handled. In the North West Region alone, the association has handled over 600 cases on behalf of Mbororo people (Interview with a Member of MBOSCUDA, 2009). In one of these cases, the association intervened to stop police officers from exploiting the family of a murder victim in the town of Mbengwi in NW Cameroon. The police had requested that the Mbororo family pay 200,000 FCFA (approximately €305) before an investigation into the murder case could be opened, even though in Cameroonian law, no fee is required for the police to open an investigation into a crime. By the time MBOSCUDA learned of the case, the family had already paid one-quarter of the requested amount. By threatening the police officers with a human rights violation lawsuit, MBOSCUDA forced the police to repay the money and to pledge that an investigation will be opened as required by law (Interview with a Member of MBOSCUDA, 2009). This case and other successful cases show that to some degree, associations can promote democratic practice within a semi-authoritarian context by exploiting existing legal opportunities to advocate for the respect of human rights.

Other cases, however, demonstrate that there are limits to the extent to which associations can advance democracy through the access to justice strategy. An example is a victimization law suit which MBOSCUDA filed in 2008 against local government administrators in Nkambe in the NW region of Cameroon. The Nkambe government officials had confiscated fifty cows as custom duty penalty from a Mbororo nomad, as he

moved his cattle from the Centre Region to the NW Region of the country. Shortly after the seizure, the government officials auctioned the animals. Given that the cattle were neither being exported nor imported, the seizure of the animals as custom duty was unlawful. MBOSCUDA filed a lawsuit at the Nkambe High Court against the local government official and presented proof that the cattle were neither imported nor being exported. The Nkambe High Court, however, dismissed the case on grounds that the cattle owner had looked suspicious and that at the time of the seizure he appeared to have intentions of taking the cattle to Nigeria. Justice was denied because some magistrates at the Nkambe High Court were implicated in the victimization. A MBOSCUDA interviewee explains:

one of the magistrates based in Nkambe had bought some of the cattle during the auction. So, the presiding judge dismissed the case to protect his colleague.

After the unfavourable ruling, MBOSCUDA kept up the legal fight by filing an appeal. Over one year afterwards, the court had still not called up a hearing for the appeal case. The case thus illustrates that due to corruption within the judicial system, the access to justice programme as a CSO strategy for reform is not successful against very powerful individuals.

The Mbororo in the NW Region of Cameroon, have suffered the most heinous human rights abuses at the hands of a powerful tycoon and rancher, Alhadji Baba Danpullo, with whom they have land conflicts. Some of Alhadji Baba's acts of victimization include unlawful eviction of the Mbororo from their land, confiscation of their cattle, imprisonment of rivals without charge, and torture (Hickey, 2002; Fon and Ndamba, 2008). Given Alhadji Baba's reputation of oppression, an interviewee describes him as "*the terror of the Mbororo people.*" MBOSCUDA has filed numerous law suits against the multimillionaire, but all these attempts to secure justice for the victimized Mbororo have not produced positive results. Given his position as a prominent member of the ruling party, as well as, his strong personal ties with the President, Alhadji Baba has proven to be above the law. Following pressure from MBOSCUDA, the central government has on many occasions dispatched special commissions to the NW region to investigate human

rights complaints made against Alhadji Baba. These investigations, however, have been merely cosmetic, and none of them has ever culminated in government penalties or sanctions against the tycoon. Additionally, although MBOSCUDA and its clients have in some cases emerged triumphant in court over Alhadji Baba, none of such judgments made against the tycoon have been implemented. As an interviewee explains, *“no police officer, local government administrator or bailiff can execute these court judgments because Alhadji Baba can use his political influence to get anyone dismissed from public office.”*

These limitations notwithstanding, the access to justice strategy plays an important role in civil society organization struggles for democracy because it challenges established power structures. Before MBOSCUDA began its access to justice programme, no one dared to defy or speak out against Alhadji Baba’s victimization. Nowadays, the tycoon’s authority is somewhat challenged when the central government sends special commissions to investigate human rights complaints made against him. Although court judgments against the multimillionaire are never implemented, the fact that some judges nowadays venture to rule against him in court is ground-breaking. This recent development is emblematic of his diminishing power. Therefore, through its paralegal scheme, MBOSCUDA has succeeded in dispelling the ‘superman’ myth associated with the name Alhadji Baba Dampullo in NW Cameroon (Fon and Ndamba, 2008).

In NW Cameroon, the most outstanding example of how the access to justice strategy challenges tyranny is the conviction of the chief of Balikumbat village, a prominent member of the ruling party, for the murder of an opposition party militant. On the 20th of August 2004, Fon Doh Gwanyin III of Balikumbat and some of his followers assaulted and killed John Kohtem, the chairman of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) of the Balikumbat district. John Kohtem had, prior to the attack, publicly criticized the revered chief for intimidating opposition party supporters, and falsification of the voters’ register for the imminent Presidential Elections. Given his status as a member of parliament for the ruling CPDM party, Fon Doh Gwanyin was under immunity and not liable to stand trial for the politically-motivated murder. Under pressure from the SDF, civil society

organizations and the media, the government in February 2005 lifted Fon Doh's parliamentary immunity. In 2006, the High Court of Ngoketunjia Division found the chief and his seven accomplices guilty of manslaughter. The once powerful and untouchable Fon Doh was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment. This unprecedented conviction of a North West Region chief and elite of the ruling party was a historic achievement for civil society pressure groups. The victory, however, turned out to be short-lived.

After serving only about six months of his sentence, Fon Doh who had filed an appeal against the court judgment was released on bail for reasons of ill-health. However, upon his release, the chief appeared in public showing no signs of illness. By August 2009, two years after his release, the Court of Appeal had not called up a hearing on the appeal case, and unofficially Fon Doh remained a free man. On the one hand, the Fon Doh case reveals the double standard of the judiciary in Cameroon, which allows protégés of the regime in power to get away with human rights violations. On another hand, the case illustrates that the access to justice strategy of associations has potentials for advancing democracy by promoting the rule of law. Although Fon Doh escaped justice on account of the legal ruse in the Court of Appeal, the initial conviction has significantly eroded the chief's power in the NW region. Although not in jail, Fon Doh is considered a *de facto* convict, and this status bars him from competing for political office. When the access to justice strategy fails to bring sanctions on perpetrators of human rights abuse like Alhadji Danpullo and Fon Doh, it at least exposes the unfairness of the Cameroon judiciary.

The judiciary system, despite its imperfections, still offers a channel through which marginalized people can voice their dissatisfaction and make demands on the government without fear of police brutality. For example, using convincing argumentation, traders in Bamenda, the capital of the NW region of Cameroon, persuaded the government to check the discretionary powers of tax controllers who perpetually exploited them. Prior to the government intervention, corruption among tax controllers was alarming, and tax controls were done in a discriminatory way. As a standard practice, tax controllers looked the other way, and allowed tax defaulters to continue operating their businesses as long as these

traders regularly gave bribes. Meanwhile, the tax controllers intimidated traders who had fulfilled their tax payment obligations, and used various strategies to impose unjustified fines on them. In this way, the tax collectors encouraged tax evasion and corruption among traders rather than respect of the law. As a trader in Bamenda points out, *“no effective control was being carried out; traders worked very hard, but they could not enjoy the revenues from their businesses, because tax controllers drained all the profits.”* To check this abuse of power and to promote accountability in tax controls, an association of traders, the *Bamenda Trade and Economic Operators* (BTEO) hired a team of lawyers to present the traders’ case to the government.

In its advocacy for reform in tax controls, BTEO focused on proving to the government that many young businesses were dying because of the exploitative and corrupt nature of tax controls. The association argued that transparency in tax controls could only be assured if tax officials were required by law to obtain court orders before proceeding to seal the shops of traders on account of tax evasion. Such a procedure, they argued, would help protect traders and young businesses from the kind of intimidation and blackmail that characterized tax controls. BTEO also highlighted that instituting such a procedure also held benefits for the state. The association argued that when fines are legally registered, it will be difficult for these tax revenues to get diverted from the public treasury into the private accounts of tax controllers. With such logical and strong argumentation, BTEO lobbied the Governor of the NW region to override the closure orders which tax control officials had imposed on many businesses in the major markets of the Region’s capital city, Bamenda. A member of the traders’ association notes:

we don’t engage in foolish things like demonstrations because when protests go out of hand, the government holds the leaders responsible. We are tactful – we explain our case and prove our point.

By confronting government with the strong argument that corruption in tax controls stifled business and economic growth, BTEO succeeded in forcing local government officials in Bamenda to revise tax control practices. Now, before beginning tax controls, tax officials are required to consult with the Market Master, a representative of the traders. The

representative of the traders and the tax controllers agree on the modalities of the tax controls before the controls begin. In case tax controllers insist on control criteria that are discriminatory and unfair to traders, the Market Master would shut down the entire market, thereby preventing the control. In this way, the traders participate in laying down the rules that are used to govern them.

Since strong legal argumentation does not always bring the government to address problems of corruption or poor accountability in the public sector, some associations in NW Cameroon use other strategies. Associations have succeeded in promoting good governance by attacking the public image of the government and causing ‘embarrassment’ to corrupt state departments. In 2007, the association, *Responsible Citizen (Dynamique Citoyenne)* conducted a survey to identify the ten most corrupt public institutions in the NW Region. *Responsible Citizen* borrowed this idea from the International NGO, *Transparency International*, whose corruption perception index rated Cameroon as the world’s most corrupt country in 1998, and caused great embarrassment to the Biya regime. According to *Responsible Citizen*’s corruption survey, the taxation sector was rated as the most corrupt public sector in the NW Region. The judiciary was second, while the police, the divisional government administration, and the public hospitals ranked third, fourth and fifth respectively.

The release of the corruption ranking and its subsequent dissemination through the private media embarrassed the managers of those public sectors which had high corruption ratings. Shortly after *Responsible Citizen* made the survey result public, the head of taxation in the NW Region organized an ‘emergency’ staff meeting to discuss measures of fighting corruption in the sector. Similarly, the Director of the General Hospital in Bamenda held a crisis meeting with doctors and nurses and took corrective action to redeem the reputation of the institution. As a civil society organization worker notes, positive changes occurred in the Bamenda General Hospital following the release of the corruption rating (Interview, April 2009).

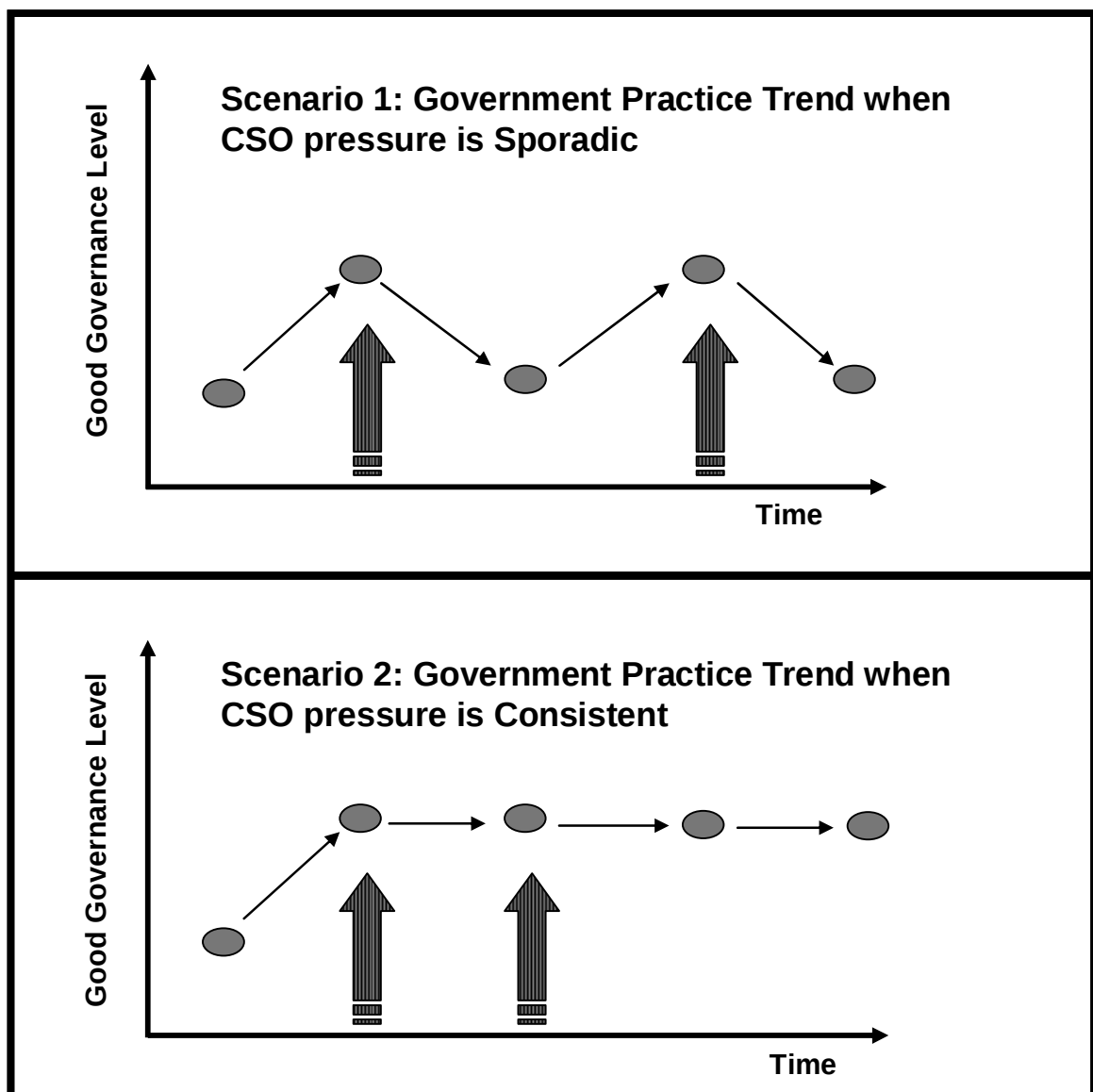
The case demonstrates that in repressive regimes, whistle-blowing and shaming are laudable strategies which civil society organizations can use to put pressure on the government. Such initiatives could have a significant impact on government if they are replicated in other regions of the country. Even though publication of the corruption perception index in 2007 produced positive results, *Responsible Citizen* failed to continue the initiative the following year, or to extend it to other regions of the country. This failure to bank on advocacy initiatives that yield results – a common feature among CSOs in the North West Cameroon – is one of the main reasons for the persistence of poor governance.

For democracy to grow, advocacy strategies that produce positive transformations in government performance need to be sustained over a period of time to allow new practices to become institutionalized. Kimberley (1979: 447) defines institutionalization as “the process whereby new norms, values, and structures become incorporated within the framework of existing patterns of norms, values, and structures”. Institutionalization as such is a variable (Zucker, 1977); it denotes the *degree* of implantation of new values, norms and practices, and not simply their presence or absence in a given society. New government practices of good governance would therefore be considered highly institutionalized when they have become routinized, such that they operate in the absence of the civil society pressures that initiated them.

The degree to which a new governance practice becomes institutionalized depends on time. As Lawrence et al (2001) note, institutionalization requires (i) time for an innovation to emerge, (ii) time for it to diffuse through the given society; (iii) time for it to gain legitimacy and (iv) time for it to stabilize. By implication, the longer a norm, value or practice is promoted or observed in a given setting, the more established or institutionalized it becomes. This implies that short-term or sporadic CSO advocacy initiatives are unlikely to produce long-lasting change in governance. One-off advocacy programmes for good governance do not allow sufficient time for the new governance practices that they initiate to diffuse, gain legitimacy and stability. As such, once the advocacy initiative ceases, the governance practices or actions that it inspired die down

(Fig. 6.3, Scenario 1). For example, in 2007, publication of the corruption perception index for public sectors in NW Cameroon forced the chiefs of the police and taxation departments to take actions aimed at fighting corruption. By the following year, this anti-corruption drive had died down because the association, *Responsible Citizen* failed to continue the advocacy strategy. As Scenario 1 in Fig. 6.3 illustrates, when CSO pressure is inconsistent, a futile cycle characterized by progress in governance followed by relapse ensues. This scenario is a contributing factor to the democracy hold-up in Cameroon.

Fig. 6.3: The relationship between Bottom-up Pressure, Time and Institutionalization of Good Governance Practices



Achieving success in advancing democracy, therefore, does not only require that associations intensify advocacy or the extent to which they carry out ‘*politicization activities*’ (P). To allow time for improvements in governance practice to take root, associations also need to be consistent in their advocacy as Scenario 2 of Fig. 6.3 illustrates.

There are two main reasons why CSO advocacy initiatives in NW Cameroon are seldom sustainable. First, donor evaluation of project effectiveness often focuses on short-term gains. For this reason, many funders run into the pitfall of withdrawing resources prematurely from advocacy projects that show signs of positive impact. Second, for NGOs and donors, repeating an intervention previously implemented in a community by another association is erroneously equated with waste of scarce resources. As a consequence, NGOs tend to skip from one advocacy project to another; instead of pursuing one claim or petition to a productive end, before embarking on another. Additionally, any NGO which repeats a particular project in a community where another organization had implemented a similar initiative is quickly accused of “*stealing ideas*” or of encroaching on the other’s target group. Avoiding duplication has become a dominant discourse among international development organizations that fund local associations in Africa. But as Scenario 2 in Fig. 6.3 illustrates, consistency in advocacy helps to consolidate or institutionalize newly introduced inclusive forms of governance, thus preventing the resurgence of pre-existing top-down modes of coordination. In this sense, in the quest for more democratic governance, duplication or repetition of CSO advocacy interventions actually ensures a more efficient use of resources.

In different words, quick fix advocacy initiatives end up not fixing much. As highlighted earlier, institutions – norms, values, cultures – are stable. Consequently, actors often “require multiple exposures to programmatic interventions” (Goodman et al, 1993) before they can change behavior or practice. With the realization that consistent advocacy is essential for long-lasting governance transformations to emerge, NGOs nowadays strive to establish partnerships with donors who can support advocacy projects over a long period

of time. By forging long-term partnerships with donors, developing country associations gain greater resource security; hence the possibility of sustaining their advocacy actions. As an NGO worker notes, long-term collaboration with donors allows associations to “*plan and focus on getting the outputs that they want.*” The rate at which successful advocacy strategies diffuse and become appropriated among associations depends on the extent to which associations share experiences with each other. An increase in communication or information dissemination among associations, therefore, has positive implications for the advocacy (political capital) attribute that will enable associations with high social capital to contribute to democratic advancement.

6.3.6 Facilitating Information Dissemination

The documentation of activities and intervention strategies is a common practice among associations like NGOs in Cameroon, because donors require accountability reports that show how funds were used. Such NGO report, which also analyze the impacts of specific intervention strategies are seldom circulated to other local associations. In other words, while information flow between local NGOs and their international donors is high, communication among local associations is low. NGOs in NW Cameroon value international linkages, because without these linkages, they would lack the resources which are essential for them to put their advocacy plans into action. Local linkages, though neglected, have significant value for bottom-up pressure for democracy.

Local linkages and communication helps associations to learn from each other. With mutual learning, associations can replicate strategies that have shown results, and avoid investing time and resources in advocacy strategies that do not work. Sharing information – especially information on achievements – can also contribute in building motivation and reducing apathy among associations. In NW Cameroon, members of CSOs to some extent, share information and experiences occasionally in capacity-building workshops. This face-to-face mode of communication, however, is not sufficient for extensive information sharing. The developing media sector in Cameroon offers a channel through which

associations can disseminate information, raise awareness on human rights and encourage public scrutiny of the government.

The press freedom law, which was passed in Cameroon in 1990 opened way for the creation of private radio stations and newspapers. Some associations in NW Cameroon are actively using private (audiovisual and print) media to make their voices heard. An example is the association, *Community Resource Center for the Disabled and Disadvantaged* (CRCDD), which has gained visibility through a weekly radio show that covers the issue of discrimination against disabled people. In the radio programme, CRCDD speaks out against government neglect of the disabled, and also inspires the handicapped with self-confidence through its slogan, “*disability is not inability.*” People with disabilities were often sidelined during polio vaccination campaigns in the NW region. The coordinator of the association notes: “*we were not given the chance to go and say to the world: here we are, victims of polio; we encourage you to vaccinate your children.*” However, thanks to CRCDD’s regular advocacy for inclusion over the radio, the Delegate of Health for the NW Region invited people with disabilities to participate in the 2009 Campaign for Immunization against Polio. The coordinator of the association explains:

since we don’t have a program for the disabled on national radio and we want our voice to be heard, it is only through the private media that we can get information across.

The private newspapers, radio and television, therefore, help associations break the domination which the government has over the dissemination of information to the public.

The availability of private-owned newspapers and radios as means of information dissemination for associations does not mean affordability. As CSO worker points out, advocating through “*the media [in Cameroon] is quite expensive*”. Survey results in Fig. 4.7 of Chapter 4 show that fifty-nine percent of associations in the NW region score below-average in ‘*Resource capacity*’ (R). This resource deficiency has implications on the degree to which civic associations can take advantage of the media for information

sharing and advocacy. Although the private media are available, the majority of grassroots associations which operate on low annual budgets cannot use them regularly for information-sharing or advocacy. Some CSOs have demonstrated that the way out of this information dissemination challenge is for associations to publish their own newsletters periodically, instead of relying solely on the private media. For example, in June 2009, the *North West Association of Development Organizations* (NWADO) launched a quarterly newsletter, “*The NWADO Brief*”, with financial support from the international organization, *Volunteer Services Overseas* (VSO). The newsletter which carried development success stories of NWADO member organizations was distributed at no cost to national and international civil society organizations based in the NW Region. The newsletter served two main goals. First, it enabled the NWADO member organizations to ‘market’ intervention strategies that had produced results, as such contributing in strengthening the civil society. Second, it helped the network of associations to gain more recognition and legitimacy in the region and as a consequence, attract new members.

Another association, the *BOTFON Human Rights Watch Group* also used a periodic newsletter, as a means of sensitizing citizens on human rights. The newsletter, “*BOTFON Human Rights Watch*” acted as an instrument of advocacy and pressure for democratization, since it exposed government human rights violations, as well as cultural practices that abused women’s rights. To recover the costs of production of the newsletter and to raise funds, the human rights association sold the newsletter at a modest cost of between 500 and 1000 FCFA (€1 and €2). However, given decreasing financial resources and difficulties in obtaining donor support, the human rights association could not sustain the publication of the newsletter.

These two examples, “*The NWADO Brief*” and the “*BOTFON Human Rights Watch*” demonstrate how publication of newsletters can help associations disseminate information when they cannot afford standard media. The two cases also show that donors can help local associations to link or network locally, if funds for media and communication are included within the development aid packages given out to these associations. Most

association advocacy programmes in Cameroon are localized. Greater information sharing, through the media, could increase the likelihood that associations in one part of the country would learn about and appropriate successful advocacy strategies developed by associations in other regions of the country. In other words, through greater information-sharing and mutual learning, a movement for democratic change could grow from current disconnected CSO advocacy campaigns.

Like most African countries, Cameroon is undergoing a gradual cyber technology revolution. However, at this time, only a small fraction of the Cameroonian population has regular access to computers and the internet. This implies that the internet as a means of information-sharing is not a feasible option for most associations, particularly those in the rural areas. Despite the press freedom law in Cameroon, private media still operate in an atmosphere of government intimidation or harassment, which forces them into self-censorship. In contrast to traditional media, the internet is more difficult to censor (Sussman, 2000). Since information flow is the lifeblood of democracy, increase in access to the internet holds promise for the democratization prospect in African countries (De Beer, 2001).

6.4 SUMMING-UP

Institutions are stable and resistant to change, but in every context, change is possible even if difficult and slow. Starting from the premise that actors can play an active role in crafting new institutions, this chapter has reviewed literature on the mechanisms that permit institutional change. Literature holds that actors can readily build new institutions by creating focal points for coordination and building a new identity; by sharing information and learning from experiences; and by banking on existing successes. In view of these mechanisms, this chapter argues that as far as the quest for democracy and equality in development is concerned, associations in NW Cameroon have scored some successes in efforts aimed at: (a) rebuilding the image of CSOs; (b) promoting networking;

(c) increasing resource capacities; (d) enhancing community participation; (e) advocating for justice and accountability; and (f) facilitating information dissemination.

Successful strategies for building the image of CSOs include measure like:

- developing a code of ethics for development associations,
- promoting whistle-blowing on fraudulent organizations,
- focusing interventions on topical issue that are relevant for the wider society.

Sound ways of promoting networking and avoiding conflicts within networks include:

- recruiting an independent coordinator to manage the CSO network,
- publishing a newsletter to show other CSOs the benefits of being in a network,
- encouraging donors to direct more funding towards network-run projects instead of projects implement by single CSOs,
- keeping network memberships fees moderate to attract a wide spectrum of CSOs,
- creating branches of prominent CSO networks in different regions to avoid competition and conflict among multiple networks.

Some identified successful practices for increasing the resource capacity of CSOs include:

- engaging in income-generating activities and microfinance projects,
- diversifying intervention areas to attract funding from different sources,
- encouraging donors to avoid using corrupt governments as ‘middlemen’ for transmission of fund to local associations,
- building the financial management capacities of local associations,
- advocating for donors to shift from project-based funding to long-term financial cooperation (program-based funding).

Laudable initiatives for enhancing community participation in Africa include:

- establishing REFLECT circles within local communities,
- assisting local communities to set-up a common community organization and to elect development committees which can represent their interests.

In semi-autocratic states, less risky strategies for advocating for justice and accountability include:

- using the legal channels or courts (right-based approaches),
- embarrassing the state by exposing malpractices,
- bringing international pressure on the state by circulating complaints and petitions to foreign embassies.

Last but not least, some practices that have worked in facilitating information dissemination include:

- taking advantage of private media to challenge state monopoly over information dissemination,
- publishing newsletters to avoid costs associated with using the private press,
- encouraging donors to include funds for media and communication in their development aid package to NGOs.

This chapter argues that, using the above measures, associations are more likely to break institutional constraints to democracy when their actions are *consistent* or continuous over a period of time, as opposed to when they are *sporadic or discontinuous*.

7

CONCLUSION

7.1 THE SUBJECT OF THIS RESEARCH

After more than half a century of so-called development practice, poverty and high levels of inequalities obstinately persist in sub-Saharan Africa. Generally-speaking, the governments of sub-Saharan African states have failed to make basic social services accessible to the majority. Government failure is not only glaring in the inability to bring economic growth to the masses, but also in institutionalized corruption and mismanagement that flourishes in state institutions. As *The Economist* (1990) aptly put it two decades ago, “bad government is the biggest single reason for poverty in the Third World.” Given the failures of sub-Saharan African states to bring socio-economic development to the majority of citizens, the issue of governance has gained prominence in international development discourse. Among researchers and practitioners alike, there is a popular call for decentralization and participatory governance as the way forward for effective development in Africa. ‘How to promote good governance?’ remains the question of the day among development actors at the global, national and local level.

In his influential book, *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam (1993) advances an answer to this complex question, using empirical data from regions in the North and South of Italy. He showed that the regions in the North with numerous and active civic associations had open, transparent, accountable, inclusive and well performing governments. On the other hand, the regions in the South with low associational activity were characterized by corruption, clientelism, hierarchical and poor performing governments. Putnam explained that associations build social capital – networks and norms of reciprocity and trust – which predisposes citizens to cooperation and pursue shared goals. He argued that in the regions of the North, the rich associational life and hence high social capital accounted for the more democratic, more accountable and well performing governments. Meanwhile, the low density of associations and the resultant low

levels of social capital in the Southern regions explained why the governments were hierarchical, corrupt and ineffective. Inspired by Tocqueville, Putnam argues that there is a positive relationship between associations and democratization. Social capital, he writes, “is the key to making democracy work” (ibid, 185).

The influence of the associations-democracy theory on international development policy and practice has been tremendous. International development organizations encourage the creation of civic associations in developing countries with the expectation that a vibrant associational life in these countries will promote democratic governance. According to mainstream development discourse, deeper or more inclusive forms of democracy, such as participatory governance, are crucial for development efforts to succeed. In comparison with traditional representative systems, participatory governance, it is argued, ensures greater equality, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability in service delivery, and thereby limits government corruption.

In view of promoting good governance for development, Western donors since the late 80s began to direct an increasing amount of funds to associations in developing countries. This increased availability of donor support triggered a rapid rise in the number of associations in sub-Saharan African countries. The fall of authoritarian regimes and the introduction of multiparty politics and civil liberties in sub-Saharan African countries in the 1990s also favored the emergence of associations. Despite this rapid increase in civil society organizations, democracy in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa has not advanced readily as anticipated. In Cameroon, for example, where there has been an association boom since the 1990s, the democratization process has stalled. Even though multiparty politics was introduced in Cameroon in 1990, regime change has not taken place; human rights abuses are common, bureaucratic corruption is high, and decentralizations schemes are cosmetic and do not allow for citizen participation. Cameroon in effect has remained a pseudo-democracy. When one considers the Putnam associations-democracy theory, the the persistence of undemocratic forms of government in sub-Saharan African countries despite the existence of numerous associations is puzzling.

In view of the disappointing performance of civil society in African countries, a critical school of researchers contend that faith in the associations-democracy relationship runs ahead scientific evidence. First, critics point out that to understand the actual role which civil society organizations in African countries can play in advancing democracy, research must pay attention to how the institutional context influences these associations. Second, they argue that while Putnam posits a relationship between social capital and good governance, he does not clearly show how social capital brings about positive changes in governance. In other words, in the associations-democracy theory, the relationship between the social capital and the political capital of associations needs to be clarified. Third, critics note that scholarly discussions on civil society and democracy in developing countries have been overwhelmingly normative. Research that makes a shift from normative discussions to empirical analysis of the actual democracy promotion potential of specific civil society actors will be more meaningful and is therefore much desired.

Taking the association-rich North West Region of Cameroon as a case, this study contributes in filling the above research gaps. The study sets out to achieve six objectives. Firstly, develop a conceptual framework that can be used for analyzing and measuring pressure for democracy in associations. Secondly, apply the conceptual tool in assessing quantitatively, the democracy pressure capacities of associations in the North West Region of Cameroon. Thirdly, analyze whether or not social capital among associations in the case study correlates with political capital. Fourthly, assess whether the influence of the institutional context (regulations, norms and cultural codes of conduct) on development associations is strong or weak. Fifthly, describe the mechanism through which the institutional context constrains the capacity of associations to pressure for democracy. Lastly, highlight some laudable measures which associations in sub-Saharan Africa can use to challenge the institutional factors that limit their potentials to press for democracy.

7.2 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

7.2.1 Methodological Contributions

A great deal of research has been done on the attributes that are important for civil society organizations to pressure for reform or good governance. Different studies espouse diverse bottom-up pressure attributes. No study, however, has yet proposed a comprehensive framework of the set of attributes necessary for effective bottom-up pressure; a framework which can be applied as a tool for analyzing association pressure for democracy in different contexts.

From a broad survey of literature on the factors for effective civil society advocacy, this study proposes the POWER framework as a conceptual tool for bottom-up pressure analysis. The POWER framework represents the argument that development associations would effectively mount pressure for democratic governance when they engage in

- Policy advocacy activities,
- Organize and form networks,
- Work in collaboration with local communities,
- Establish links with opposition political parties, and
- Rally resources for their activities.

Although the five attributes of bottom-up pressure (POWER) are in reality qualitative in nature, they can also be assessed quantitatively with the help of a carefully structured questionnaire. When applied quantitatively in a given locality – as is the case in this study – the POWER framework reveals the deficiencies in bottom-up pressure capacity in that locality. This diagnosis can enlighten associations and proponents of democracy about which attributes of pressure they need to strengthen in the given locality.

The POWER framework enables a more structured qualitative analysis of bottom-up pressure in a single case study, and a structured qualitative comparison across two or three cases. When used quantitatively, the framework also shows the relationship or correlations

between the different attributes of pressure in a particular context. Although a large amount of qualitative research has been done on civil society associations and pressure for democracy in Africa, quantitative comparison across provinces within a country or across different countries is rare. The POWER framework and its accompanying questionnaire – presented in this study – is a methodological contribution that now makes large scale quantitative studies a possibility. The conceptual framework is definitely not free of weaknesses, but as its use in this study demonstrates, it holds methodological promise for bottom-up pressure assessment. The framework is the first attempt of to crystallize arguments on the attributes for effective civil society advocacy; and further research works can build on this first step.

7.2.3 Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes in addressing two important research gaps in the associations-democracy theory, namely: the influence of the institutional context on bottom-up pressure and the relationship between social capital and political capital.

First, using correspondence analysis in conjunction with the theory of institutional isomorphism, the research shows that the influence of the institutional context on associations in the North West Region of Cameroon is strong. The institutional context – comprising regulations, norms and cultural codes of conduct – constrain association pressure for democracy by limiting political capital. Quantitative analysis reveals that although social capital is high among associations in the case study, political capital and resource capacities of these civil society organizations is low. This low political capital and resources capacity of associations in the case study explains why the association boom in Cameroon has not produced significant improvements in governance as expected.

As Putnam argues, high social capital in the form of cooperation and networking that develops from a vibrant associational life is an important contributing factor to democratization. However, the existence of high levels of social capital is not sufficient for

associations to have a positive effect on state administration. This is so because cooperation and networking is not always political in nature. By arguing that social capital “is the key to making democracy work”, Putnam (1993: 185) subsumed political capital as an attribute that invariably accompanies high social capital. This study demonstrates that this assumption is incorrect.

Quantitative assessment and correspondence analysis of bottom-up pressure attributes among associations in the North West Region of Cameroon reveal that social capital and political capital are not correlated or conjoint. The study argues that the constraining effects, which government and donor regulations, societal norms, and cultural codes of conduct have on the political capacities of associations, are responsible for this social capital-political capital disassociation.

7.3.2 Recommendations for African Associations and International Donors

In addition to the methodological and theoretical contributions, this research holds some practical recommendations for development associations and international development organizations that strive for deeper forms of democracy in Africa. If development associations in countries like Cameroon hope to have a stronger impact on democratization processes, energies must be directed towards building their political capital and resource capacities.

Apart from contributing in service delivery, development associations in such pseudo-democratic African countries like Cameroon need to first confront head-on those regulatory, normative and cultural institutions that limit their maneuvering space. For instance, associations in Cameroon need to focus on getting rid of the state regulations that proscribe the formation and registration of associations that have political objectives. They also need to strive towards elimination of the state decree that grants the government the right to ban protests. These regulations limit the very liberties which the freedom of association law claims to grant. Without first striving to improve the legal environment

that governs their own activities, the influence of associations on other structure of governance will remain limited.

The view that ‘development work’ is a non-political enterprise, and the view that politics is the prerogative of politicians and not of associations are widely accepted among associations in Cameroon. These two norms act as a major setback to the development of political capital among associations. Such norms are not peculiar to associations in Cameroon, but are common in development practice in other African countries. Ferguson, for example, refers to development work in Lesotho as an “anti-politics machine” that subdues local communities and strengthens the powers of government. Drawing on case study evidence, this research argues that the reflective participation approach to development is a praiseworthy measure which associations can use in countering the above norms. In reflective participation forums, citizens develop the habit of asking questions about the underlying causes of their problems, and they also reflect on how these root cause can be tackled. Adopting a reflective participation approach to development can thus empower associations to identify and strive towards overturning those underlying political, social, and cultural structures that promulgate inequality and poverty in local communities.

In addition to the regulatory and normative institutions that constrain their political capital, associations in NW Cameroon operate in a cultural environment that encourages the reverence of power holders, namely political elites and chiefs. By practicing participation in local level development projects, associations can gradually build within society the disposition to hold power to account. In the Cameroonian context where the government shows little tolerance for accountability demands made in the form of protests, associations have turned to the legal system as their battleground against abuses of power. Although these development associations have scored many successes through this ‘access to justice approach’, they have not always succeeded in getting the legal system to sanction abuses of power. However, even in failure, the access to justice approach holds advocacy value because it exposes the unfairness of the judicial system. Qualitative data also indicates that by attacking the image of the government through the shaming of corrupt and poor

performing sectors, associations in sub-Saharan Africa can influence the government to consider reform.

Carrying out advocacy does not suffice for changes in governance to emerge: the manner in which advocacy is carried out also matters. Institutions – regulations, norms, and cultural practices – that uphold systems of governance within a given region are stable and resistant to change. One-off or intermittent advocacy interventions on the part of associations are unlikely to result in durable institutional change. To succeed in effecting institutional change and producing long-lasting improvements in the system of governance, associations in African countries need to exercise consistency in their advocacy interventions. When the interventions of development associations are intermittent, institutions relapse to their original state whenever those interventions that push for change are interrupted. Consistency in association interventions gives time for new governance norms, value and practices to become institutionalized, thereby yielding durable changes in governance. Among international donors working in the NW region of Cameroon, the practice of avoiding duplication of funded association activities is popular. For donors, duplication – funding an association to carry out an advocacy program that is already being implemented in the same locality by another association – is seen as a waste of resources. This ‘avoid duplication policy’ is a serious barrier to consistency in association advocacy activity.

The likelihood that the advocacy actions of development associations will trigger positive changes in governance also depends on the strength of the association networks that coordinate such interventions. Networking among development associations in NW Cameroon is fraught with conflicts due to stiff competition between network members over donor resources. Associations can reduce such strife if network members lay down clear rules that stipulate the kind of donor resources which associations can compete for individually, and which kind of resources they must apply for as a network. Donors can also encourage networking among development associations if in their funding allocations,

they give preference to network-run projects rather than projects run by single associations.

International donors have made substantial efforts to strengthen networking among CSOs in the North West Region of Cameroon. Donors, however, must recognize that contrary to the discourse about social capital's wonderful democratizing powers, social capital in reality is weak in the absence of political capital and financial resources. Qualitative and quantitative evidence from the North West Region of Cameroon makes this abundantly clear. International development organizations would contribute in building this much needed political capital if they refrain from earmarking development funds primarily for service delivery activities, and encourage local associations to include advocacy components in their development programs. Also, international donors would better contribute to political capital in local African associations if they channel funding directly to these associations rather than through the government. Given the high levels of bureaucratic corruption in pseudo-democratic countries like Cameroon, donor funds channelled through the state easily becomes a co-optation tool in the service of the government; a tool used for neutralizing vocal associations.

In summary, this study is particularly relevant for international development organizations because it gives evidence-based voice to the institutionalist argument that 'contexts differ and contexts matter'. International donors have not been wrong to embrace the idea that supporting the formation of associations in African countries can result in positive externalities for democracy and development. However, if due consideration is not given to the ways in which regulations, norms, and the cultural setting in African countries affect associations, and steps are not taken to challenge these institutions, civil society organizations would not deliver expected results. The knowledge on how the institutional context constrains political capital among associations should make international donors rethink many of their policies. It should make them rethink the kind of associations to which they give funding preference; rethink the kind of activities they encourage associations to focus on; and rethink the ways in which they channel funds to associations.

Only when international donors recognize that building social capital does not suffice in the advancement of democracy, can they also take stronger action to promote two other assets, namely political capital and resource capacity among associations.

The above practical recommendations for development associations and donors are drawn from the experience of associations in the Cameroonian context. Worthy of note, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa shared a common socio-political background until the mid 90s. Also, development associations in these countries have emerged and evolved in the same international development paradigm. As shown in Chapter 5, through reference to research works elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, development associations in many countries on the sub-continent experience some of the institutional constraints identified in this case study. The practical recommendations of this research are, therefore, applicable to those sub-Saharan African countries in which institutions similar to those in Cameroon shape the reality of development associations.

7.4 LIMITATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has addressed all the research objectives outlined in the introductory chapter, and it has tested the five sets of hypothesis which it set out to examine. However, the research has a number of limitations which further research can tackle.

First, the research proposes a conceptual tool (the POWER framework) to guide qualitative analysis and quantitative assessment of association pressure for democracy. The five attributes of bottom-up pressure in this conceptual framework are accorded equal importance in the case study. More research is required to verify this assumption. Although it is clear that all five attributes of POWER are important for bottom-up pressure in different ways, some of the parameters might, in reality, have greater significance than others. The relative significance of the five attributes might be an empirical issue rather than a theoretical issue. Whatever the case, research on how the five bottom-up pressure attributes rank in importance relative to each other in the Cameroonian context, will go a

long way to enlighten associations and development practitioners about, where in POWER lies the greatest power.

Second, this research suffers from the main limitation of the single case study research design, namely, the inability to offer comparison. The findings of the research raise many questions which can only be answered by a multiple case study or a survey research. For example, would associations in other parts of Cameroon, or regions in other sub-Saharan African countries show similar bottom-up pressure capacities as the North West region of Cameroon? Is the disassociation between social capital and political capital (which this study reveals) a common feature among associations in sub-Saharan Africa? Or will associations in a country like Ghana – which is considered the shiny example of democracy in Africa – show a correlation between these attributes? The need for a comparative study or a multiple case study research that makes use of the POWER framework to analyze bottom-up pressure in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be overemphasized.

Third, this study assesses bottom-up pressure quantitatively and uses process tracing to show how specific association practices impinge on governance practices or institutions. However, no inference is made about the link between the *level* of pressure and the mode of governance or the performance of government. The study rests on the common assumption that a high level of bottom-up pressure will stimulate positive changes in governance. While this assumption is logical, it needs to be verified; because governments do not always respond to civic pressure. Verifying this assumption will require a multiple case study design and hence a considerable amount of resources and time.

Fourth, this study presents an assessment of association pressure for democracy in the North West Region of Cameroon, but it gives no clue whether and how this pressure has changed over time. Further research could adopt a longitudinal research design that assesses the bottom-up pressure capacities of associations over a particular time interval; for example, every two, three, four or five years. Such a study that takes a longitudinal

approach could help identify how particular factors or events influence the evolution of the bottom-up pressure capacities of associations in a given region or locality.

As mentioned earlier, Warren (2004: 46) rightly points out that “there is a very large amount of thinking and research to be done if we are really to take seriously the democracy-civil society [or association] connection.” This study has contributed in filling this research gap by proposing a conceptual tool for quantitative analysis of bottom-up pressure; by providing a qualitative analysis of how the institutional context in an African country influences the associations-democracy relationship; and by demonstrating within a single case study that social capital and political capital in associations are not necessarily coupled. But perhaps the greatest input of the study is that, through its findings, it also points researchers towards the additional work that needs to be accomplished for us to fully understand the associations-democracy connection.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Associations
African Institute for Economic and Social Development (INADES Formation)
Aghem cultural and Development Association
Angel of Mercy
Angong Cultural and Development Association (ADCA)
Association for Youth Justice and Development (AYJD)
Awing Cultural and Development Association (ACUDA)
Babungo Cultural and Development Association
Bafut Manjong Cultural and Development Association
Bali Nyonga Development and cultural Association (BANDECA)
Baligaam Elite Cultural and Development Association
Balikumbat Cultural and Development Association
Bambili Cultural and Development Association
Bambui Cultural and Development Association
Bamendakwe Development and Cultural Association
Baminjen Cultural and Development Association
Bamunkumbit Cultural and Development Association
Befang Cultural and Development Association
Belo Cultural and Development Association
Beri Kindness for Individual and Development Services (BERIKIDS)
Binkar Development and Cultural Association (BINDECA)
Botfon Human Rights Watch (BOHURW)
Buwe Cultural and Development Association
Cameroon Bar Association
Cameroon Commonwealth Nurses Association
Cameroon Ecovillage NGO (CECOVIL)
Cameroon Teachers Trade Union (CATTU)
Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy (CHRAPA)
Centre for Rehabilitation and Abolition of Trauma (CRAT)
Christian Children Care International (CHALICE)
Civil Law Society
Community Development and Epilepsy Foundation (CODEF)
Community Education and Development Service (CEDS)
Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD)
Community Resource Centre for the Disabled and the Disadvantaged (CRCDD)
Community Unity Trust

Donga-Mantum Community Radio (DMCR)
Esu Cultural and Development Association (ECUDA)
Fight Against Poverty Association (FAPA)
Green Care
Guneku Cultural and Development Association
Hope For Widows and Orphans Ministries (HWOM)
Human Rights Resource Management Clinic and Education Centre (HURMACE)
Integrated Youth Volunteer Foundation (IYVF)
Interfaith Vision Cameroon (IVFcam)
International Assistance for Community Development (INACOD)
Kejum Keku Cultural and Development Association
Knowledge for Children NGO
Kumbo Development and Orientation Centre (KUDOC)
Light Africa Cameroon
Mankwi Cultural and Development Association (MACUDA)
Mbatu Cultural and Development Association
Mbem Cultural and Development Association
Mbengwi Cultural and Development Association (MBECUDA)
Mbororo Social Cultural and Development Association (MBOSCUDA)
Mbuh Cultural and Development Association
Mmen Cultural and Development Association
Modelle Development Association (MODA)
Mundum Cultural and Development Association
Muslim Students Association Bamenda (MUSAB)
National Organisation of Human Rights (NOHR)
Navti Foundation
Nda Lela
Ngie Cultural and Development Association (NCADA)
Ngoketunjia AIDS Fighters (NAFI)
Ngwo Cultural and Development Association (NCUDA)
Nka-ni-kwi-ni Mankon
Nkumu Fed Fed
North West Association of Development Organisations (NWADO)
North West Farmers Organisation (NOWEFOR)
North West Women Empowerment Forum (NOWEF)
Nseh cultural and Development Association
Nso Development Association (NSODA)
Oku cultural and Development Association
Oshei Cultural and Development Association (OCUDA)
Pinyin cultural and Development Association
Piyin Sustainable Farming System (PISUFAS)

Positive Vision Cameroon for Community Development
Pure and Undefined Hope Ministries (PUHM)
Rural Infrastructure Development Group (RIDGRO)
Santos Development Organisation (SADO)
Save the Young NGO (SAYO)
Self Reliance Promoters (SEREP)
Sharon Farmers Group
Shisong Development Association
Society for Initiatives in Rural Development and Environmental Protection (SIRDEP)
Socio-cultural Association for Livestock Breeding and Development (SODELCO)
Star Crusaders Against AIDS
Strategic Action to Alleviate Suffering (STRATAS)
Strategic Humanitarian Services in Cameroon (SHUMAS)
Sustainable Balanced Development Foundation (SIBADEF)
Tabenken Cultural and Development Association
The Development and Human Rights Monitor (DEHERI)
Torch Bearer Foundation
Weh Cultural and Development Association
Welfare Foundation for the Underprivileged and Vulnerable (WELFUV)
Wombong Area Development Union (WADU)
Women Empowerment Institute Cameroon (WEICAM)
Women in Action Against Gender-based Violence (WACameroon)
Women's Initiative for Health Education and Economic Development - Cameroon (WINHEEDCAM)
Youth Outreach Program (YOP)