

## ■ CAMEROON

# Aid must be more efficiently managed



Although Cameroon will not achieve the MDGs by 2015, it may become an emerging country before the 2035 deadline set in its 2007 Strategic Document for Growth and Employment. For this to happen, the State must completely overhaul its economic and financial governance, among other things, and put an equal value on the skills of its women, men, young people and adults. In order for the management of international aid to become more efficient, civil society organizations have issued a call for gender to be taken into account and for better coordination with donors.

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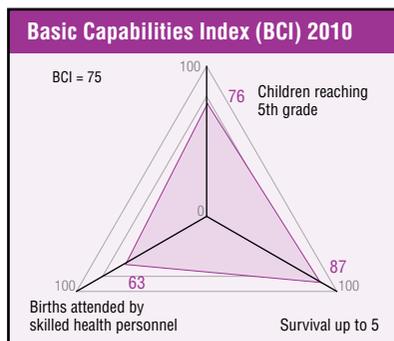
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Between 2004 and 2009 Cameroon managed to maintain political stability except for a wave of protests in 2008 against the rising cost of living.<sup>2</sup> On the domestic front a process of political decentralization began, while in foreign relations sovereignty over the Bakassi peninsula was peacefully ceded by Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> In addition, good macroeconomic results made it possible for the country to reach the decision and culmination points in the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, which opened up access to debt relief plans and new lines of finance for development programs.

However, in spite of this encouraging progress, the country still has serious development problems. Cameroon is ranked 153 out of 182 countries in the 2009 UNDP Human Development Index, which estimates that over 57% of the population are living on less than USD 2 a day.<sup>4</sup> Data from 2001 show that some 32% of the population were illiterate – and the rate for women (40%) was almost double the rate among men (23%).<sup>5</sup> According to official estimates, the unemployment rate in 2007 was 6.2% overall, and 14.1% in urban areas. The under-employment rate was 75.8%, while the informal sector remained



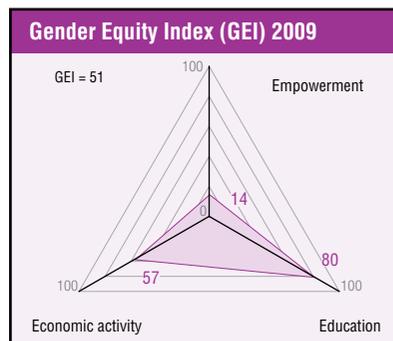
by far the largest provider of employment (90% of the total).<sup>6</sup>

### Growth and employment

In this context, the Government set out its long-term goals in its Strategic Document for Growth and Employment (DSCE according to its French acronym), designed to transform Cameroon in successive 10-year phases into an emerging, democratic country by 2035 that is united in spite of its diversity.<sup>7</sup> The plan is based on four basic pillars:

- To reduce poverty to a socially acceptable level.
- To reach the status of a middle income country.
- To become an industrialized country.
- To strengthen the democratic process and national unity.

Its executive summary presents the DSCE as an integrated development framework with financial coherence, coordination between government action and foreign aid, consultation and cooperation with civil society, the private sector and development partners, and guided by analytical studies to clarify the management of development. The document consists of seven interdependent chapters that deal with: (a) an examination of development policies, (b) the vision for long-term development, (c) growth



strategy, (d) employment strategy, (e) governance and state management, (f) the macroeconomic and budget framework, and (g) the institutional framework and start-up and follow-up DSCE mechanisms.

With a view to accelerating growth, formalizing employment and reducing poverty, the Government began implementation with some concrete targets:

- To raise the average annual growth to 5.5% by the 2010 to 2020 period.
- To cut informal work by at least 50% by 2020 through the creation of tens of thousands of formal jobs over the next 10 years.
- To reduce monetary poverty from 39.9% in 2007 to 28.7% in 2020.

### The role of official development assistance

According to data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the amounts of official development assistance (ODA) that Cameroon receives – through the World Bank, UNDP and the OECD – have varied between 5% and 10% of the country's budget in the past five years.<sup>8</sup> The average percentage among aid-receiving countries that have subscribed to the Paris Declaration is 12%, so it might be said that Cameroon is not heavily dependent on these resources.

Of the 13 donors involved in Cameroon the European Union and France are by far the largest. In 2008–2013 the EU's European Development Fund contributed EUR 239 million and the amount of aid

1 The Cameroon National Social Watch Coalition includes some 15 associations and is based on Dynamic Citizenship, an independent network structured around the 10 regions of the country.

2 In that year there were strikes and street demonstrations in Douala, the economic capital, in protest against the cost of fuel and food. These subsequently spread to the rest of the country.

3 After an international court ruling in 2002, Nigeria ceded its claims to the peninsula in August 2008, thus putting an end to a long-running dispute between the two countries that nearly led to war in 1981.

4 UNDP, "Human Development Report 2009: Cameroon." Available from: <[www.hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_CMR.html](http://www.hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_CMR.html)>.

5 CIA, "The World Factbook." Available from: <[www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html)>.

6 OECD, African Economic Outlook, 2008. Available from: <[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/13/42/40577073.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/13/42/40577073.pdf)>.

7 The DSCE is a second generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) but it is often criticized by civil society organizations for being too restrictive and rather ineffective. Available from: <[www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Cameroon%20DSCE2009.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Cameroon%20DSCE2009.pdf)> [in French].

8 AFRODAD, A Critical Assessment of Aid Management & Donor Harmonisation—The Case of Cameroon, 2007. Available from: <[www.afrodad.org/downloads/publications/Aid%20Mgmt%20Cameroon%20Final.pdf](http://www.afrodad.org/downloads/publications/Aid%20Mgmt%20Cameroon%20Final.pdf)>.

from France increased considerably thanks to a Contract of Debt Reduction and Development, which was signed in June 2006 in Yaoundé for EUR 500 million. This means that France is subsidizing the re-financing of all its ODA credits for the 2006-2010 period.

For a very long time foreign donors and the Cameroon Government worked separately, each on its own projects, but things have now improved thanks in particular to the program to implement the principles of the Paris Declaration. The Government has set up a mechanism for dialogue to allocate and utilize the aid more efficiently. This involves twice-yearly meetings between the General Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Land Distribution and representatives from the donors' committee, parliament and civil society. It is through this mechanism that the Government and its partners define what role aid is to play in development, employment creation and the vision of Cameroon 2035. They also discuss the reforms the Government ought to implement to make the aid more effective in terms of results.

In 2008 the OECD submitted an evaluation of the Cameroon aid situation based on the indicators specified in the Paris Declaration. This concluded that the Government must improve its leadership of national development, and donors should ensure that agreements made in the OECD offices are reflected in more harmonious management when the time comes to execute joint projects, which means the two sides should assume joint responsibility for the outcomes.

Some public investment projects have yielded visible results – for example, new infrastructure in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala and the construction of the Cameroon-Gabon-Central African Republic trans-national highway. However, according to a study by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Cameroon's capacity to receive more aid is in many cases limited by the failure of the Government and its technical and financial partners to coordinate with each other or reach agreements about priorities. Moreover, civil society groups criticize public officials as being de-motivated, mired in corruption, incompetent and incapable of implementing ambitious programs and projects to develop the country in spite of the ODA it receives.

## The main problems

### Gender

Indicators show that primary schooling for girls has improved, with the girl/boy ratio rising from 0.83 to 0.89 in the 2001 to 2007 period. In secondary education, however, there was a reduction over the same period: the ratio fell from 0.93 to 0.86. As indicated above, the illiteracy rate is bigger among women than men. The literacy ratio among young women (ages 15-24) has remained stable at approximately 0.88.<sup>9</sup>

Since more than 55% of the economically active population (female and male) work in the informal agriculture,<sup>10</sup> any sustainable development project has to address the needs of this economic sector, which is also that among which poverty is most widespread. Yet the consideration of gender is still very much based on the feminization of jobs; women's labour force participation in the non-agricultural sector merely rose from 21% in 2006 to 22% in 2009.<sup>11</sup> This increase is rather small because people's attitudes to gender issues change very slowly. It is more difficult for women to access the means of production like land, credit and appropriate technologies.<sup>12</sup>

In 2009, women were still extraordinarily under-represented in decision-making areas such as high positions in the public sector, national representation and decentralized land collectives. Women held only 13.9% of the seats in parliament and headed 12.5% of ministries. There were just 24 women out of 180 deputies in the legislature for the 2007-2012 period, a regression from the 1988-1992 legislature in which 14.4% were women.<sup>13</sup>

Cameroon was rated at 51 points by the 2009 Social Watch Gender Equity Index, which measures the gap between women and men based on a number of different indicators (with 100 points denoting equality). This is below the sub-Saharan Africa average of 55 points and shows severe regression since 2004.<sup>14</sup>

In view of these data, and going beyond Government rhetoric in favour of gender equality, civil society is calling for more concrete action to combat inequality in areas where it still persists. This includes proposing a law that would ensure gender-

responsive indicators that are in place to measure changes in the situation of women and men in all sectors during the implementation of the DSCE project and other plans geared to 2035. The main components of this proposal are:

- Setting parity quotas for women/men, young people/adults and the disabled.
- Identifying existing institutions or creating institutions to exercise supervision, direction, application, control, follow-up and sanctioning in this area.

### Health

UNICEF statistics for 2008 placed the under-five child mortality rate at 131 per 1,000 live births,<sup>15</sup> showing an improvement. However this is still very far from the target for 2015. The reduction was made possible by an increase in vaccinations against measles (coverage went from 64.8% to 78.8%), the promotion of breastfeeding and the fight against childhood illnesses and nutritional deficiency.

From 1998 to 2004 maternal mortality increased from 430 to 669 per 100,000 births. To reach the MDG target for this indicator the figure should be not higher than 350.<sup>16</sup>

### Conclusion

Although Cameroon will fail to attain most of the MDGs by 2015, it could become an emerging country before the deadline set in the DSCE. To do this it will have to, among other things, make sweeping changes to its economic and financial governance and place an equal value on the skills of its women, men, young people, adults and disabled population with no discrimination of any kind.

If development programs are to be implemented more efficiently and yield good end results it is crucially important for funds to be managed in a much better way, which means a far higher degree of coordination between the Government and its technical and financial partners abroad. This should start with jointly setting a clear list of priorities. ■

9 DSCE, p. 13. Available from: <[www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Cameroon%20DSCE2009.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Cameroon%20DSCE2009.pdf)> [in French].

10 Backiny-Yetna, Prosper, "Secteur informel, fiscalité et équité: l'exemple du Cameroun," *The African Statistical Journal*, Volume 9, November 2009.

11 World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report.

12 DSCE, *op. cit.*

13 Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in Parliaments," data base available from: <[www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)>.

14 Available from: <[www.socialwatch.org/node/11561](http://www.socialwatch.org/node/11561)>.

15 UNICEF, 2008. Available from: <[www.unicef.org/infobycountry/cameroon\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/cameroon_statistics.html)>.

16 DSCE, *op. cit.*