

THE WOMEN MEDIATION PROJECT

OPEN SOCIETY
Initiative for West Africa



BASELINE SURVEY REPORT

JULY 2024

Done by:

MOTHER OF HOPE CAMEROON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Completing this baseline survey is thanks to the collective efforts of the MOHCAM team, the data collectors, local community stakeholders, our donors and partner organizations.

Primarily, we extend gratitude to the community members and the key informants from the 34 sub-divisions in the North West Region of Cameroon where this survey was carried out. Your willingness to participate and share valuable insights was instrumental in providing a comprehensive understanding of the local mediation structures and the role of women. We are deeply grateful to our dedicated data collectors who beat all the odds especially security challenges to make sure accurate and meaningful data was gathered in a professional manner.

We appreciate all government and community stakeholders of the different sub-divisions for giving us authorizations to operate and ensuring an enabling environment throughout the data collection process.

We are also indebted to our project team especially our focal persons for their dedication and hard work.

Finally, we acknowledge the financial and logistical support provided by our donors – Open Society Foundation. Their support has been vital in enabling us to carry out this important work and lay the groundwork for the **Women Mediation Project**

Sirri Cynthia Wakuna Ngang
Project Coordinator

TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 1

ABOUT MOTHER OF HOPE CAMEROON (MOHCAM) 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

A. INTRODUCTION 8

B. METHODOLOGY 14

C. SURVEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 20

I. Demographic Profile of Respondents 20

II. Peace Processes and Institutions within communities 21

III. Role of Women in Ensuring Peace in the Community as Individuals and within Institutions 27

D. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 31

I. Interpretation of Findings 31

II. Implications to the Project 33

III. Recommendations to Stakeholders 34

CHALLENGES 37

CONCLUSION 37

FINAL THOUGHTS 38

ANNEXES 38

ABOUT MOTHER OF HOPE CAMEROON (MOHCAM)

MOHCAM is a non-profit Women and Youths rights led organization located in the North West Region of Cameroon. MOHCAM is an organization in Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC. MOHCAM advocates against child marriage and gender-based violence in homes, schools and communities. MOHCAM promotes and foster programs on menstrual hygiene management and the sexual reproductive health rights of adolescents. MOHCAM educates and empowers underprivileged adolescent and young women economically through income generating activities to build resilience and sustainable development. MOHCAM has a 15 years experience in implementing diverse projects on the promotion of gender justice and human rights, policy development, advocacy on women and girls' rights, sexual and reproductive health rights, education and peacebuilding in conflict-affected regions in Cameroon, particularly in communities and schools.

Our Mission

Building a violence free world for women and youths.

Our Vision

Giving Hope to the Hopeless and propagate a culture of peace and justice.

Our Values

- Dignity and Respect
- Creativity
- Education
- Volunteerism

Pillars of Intervention:

- **Human Rights:** Human Rights prevention, monitoring and promotion, gender Based Violence, child marriage, gender equality, Sexual violence and Intimate partners violence.
- **Peace and Security:** Peace-building and conflict prevention, Countering violence extremism, women advocacy and capacity building as community mediators, implementation of UN Resolution 1325 and 2250
- **Education:** Rights to education, Girl child education, peace education and educational stakeholder strengthening.
- **Health:** Provision of primary healthcare, awareness raising, Water, Hygiene, and Sanitation (WASH) and health stakeholder strengthening. MOHCAM's main core focus issues are Menstruation and Body rights, HIV, Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, Malaria, Cholera and COVID-19.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Women Mediation Project” aims to strengthen the capacity of community women mediators for effective representation and participation in future peace talks and negotiations. Women play a vital role in peace processes, a principle enshrined in the UNSCR 1325 agenda on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). This agenda underscores the long-term impact of women’s meaningful and equal participation in mediation, conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, post-conflict recovery, and governance, in fostering peace and stability.

This project seeks to localize women's mediation processes within communities to develop grassroots strategies for feminist-focused movements. These movements aim to support and build strong foundations for women's participation in community mediation and peacebuilding. Identifying local community mediation and conflict resolution processes helps to strengthen women's leadership skills and decision-making capacities, ensuring they can be effectively represented and participate meaningfully in conflict prevention and resolution processes. Increased participation in community mediation directly enhances women's ability to contribute to decision-making processes at local levels on issues of conflict, peace, and reconciliation.

However, gendered misconceptions and cultural barriers often impede women, their families, and their communities, exacerbating instability from

existing conflict structures. Addressing these issues is crucial for effective mediation and peacebuilding.

Aligned with Cameroon's second-generation UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan, which emphasizes the four pillars of Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Perseverance (Relief and Recovery); this project reflects a commitment to promoting women's participation in conflict resolution and peace processes using mediation as an entry point. The project employs a multi-stakeholder approach, from grassroots to international levels, focusing on collaboration through targeted training and capacity building. It is holistic, participatory, and context-driven grassroots approach, which aims to create an inclusive conflict resolution model, recognizing women as essential agents for achieving sustained gender equality, peace, and security.

This baseline survey was conducted in a bid to understand the existing local conflict resolution structures and techniques in the North West Region, the level of involvement and roles of women in these structures, and to identify opportunities for capacity building. The findings will inform the project's strategy to enhance women's participation in community mediation and peace processes, aligning with the goals of Cameroon's UNSCR 1325 Action Plan.

The methodology used in this study was a primary data research technique with data collected from 517 Key informants holding leadership positions in the communities and have understanding of the local community realities. Data was collected within a one-month period.

The baseline survey revealed several key findings. Traditional councils, religious institutions and Quarter Management Committees are critical mediating bodies, present in 83%, 71% and 67% of the communities respectively and are considered highly effective in mediating issues by over 88% of the community members. Women are highly active in informal mediation roles, with 70% of respondents recognizing their involvement in family and community disputes. However, their participation in formal structures that carry out mediation processes is significantly lower, as just about 35% of women are in these structures highlighting the need to address barriers such as cultural norms and gender biases through advocacy meetings with male leaders.

Over 95% of the respondents (490) have been involved in solving conflict before, women comprising 50% of this population but unfortunately less than 35% of them have ever received any form of training or coaching amplifying the need to intentionally build capacities.

Of the 65% of women who hold leadership positions in formal mediation structures, over 85% of them are proactive, take initiatives and participate actively in the mediation process in the groups implying if women are given more opportunities, they will cause a great change in peace processes.

The results of this baseline survey informs the guiding efforts to increase awareness and enhance the capacity and participation of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the North West Region of Cameroon and beyond.

A. INTRODUCTION

Project Background / Rationale

The project seeks to address the significant underrepresentation of women in peacebuilding and mediation processes in the communities of the North West Region. This region has been severely affected by the Anglophone crisis, leading to numerous challenges such as internal displacement, violent conflicts, and heightened intertribal tensions. In addition, being social beings, misunderstandings and conflicts always arise and peace is always sought for emphasizing the importance of mediators be it within social groups or as individuals. Over the years, Local structures have been put in place in communities like Traditional councils, peace reconciliation groups, quarter management committees, etc. to solve and mediate for this problems but it has been observed that women, who are naturally inclined towards peacebuilding, remain underutilized in formal mediation roles.

The project aims to strengthen the capacity of community women as mediators and employs a bottom up approach to ensure their effective representation and participation in peace talks and negotiations. By December 2026, the project envisions a robust network of women mediators who are well equipped to contribute meaningfully to peace processes at both community and regional levels.

Objectives of Baseline Survey

- ❖ Identify Existing Mediation Structures. To understand the current mediation structures within the communities and how they function.
- ❖ Assess Women's Participation. To evaluate the extent to which women are integrated and engaged in these mediation structures.
- ❖ Identify Training Needs. To determine the specific training and capacity building needs of potential and existing women mediators.
- ❖ Inform Project Implementation. To gather data that will inform the implementation strategies of the Project, ensuring that the interventions are relevant and impactful.

Scope and Delimitation

The baseline survey covered the 34 subdivisions in the North West Region of Cameroon. Key informant interviews were conducted with individuals representing various categories such as religious leaders, traditional council members, women leaders, leaders of renowned social groups, and quarter heads. The data was collected within a one-month period in the month of June 2024

The North West Region of Cameroon is characterized by a diverse demographic and socio-political landscape. The ongoing Anglophone crisis has significantly affected the region, resulting in numerous socio-economic challenges. Geographically, the North West Region features a mix of highlands, rolling hills, and fertile valleys, which significantly influence its agricultural activities. The region's economy is predominantly driven by

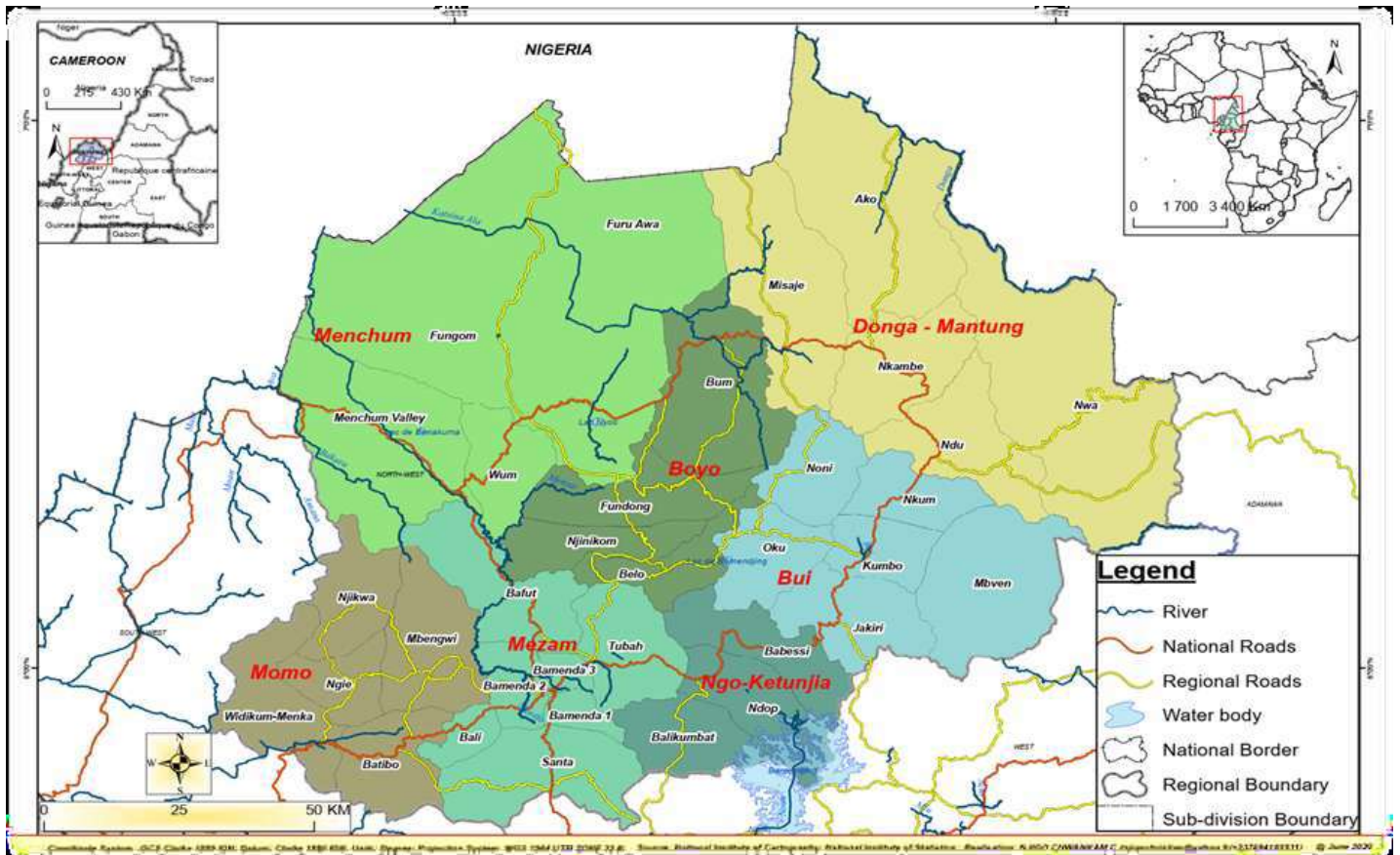
agriculture, with key crops including maize, beans, and plantains. Additionally, the North West is recognized for its potential in tourism, thanks to its scenic landscapes and cultural festivals. However, the region also faces challenges such as infrastructural deficits and socio-political issues, which affect its development and overall quality of life for its residents. The survey aimed to capture a representative sample of this diverse population to ensure that the findings are comprehensive and reflective of the region's realities.

Area of Work and Respondents

NORTH WEST (BAMENDA)			
SN	DIVISION: Head Quarter	Sub-Divisions	Respondents
1	BUI: KUMBO	Kumbo	15
		Noni (Nkor)	15
		Mbven (Mbiame)	15
		Jakiri	16
		Oku	16
		Nkum	15
2	DONGA-MANTUNG: Nkambe	Nkambe	15
		Misaje	15
		Ako	15

		Nwa	17
		Ndu	16
3	MENCHUM: WUM	Wum	15
		Fungom(Zhoa)	19
		Menchum Valley (Benakuma)	17
		Furu Awa	11
4	MEZAM: BAMENDA	Bamenda I	15
		Bamenda II	13
		Bamenda III	16
		Tubah	10
		Santa	15
		Bafut	15
		Bali	15
5	BOYO: FUNDONG	Fundong	15
		Belo	16
		Bum (Fonfuka)	16
		Njinikom	15

6	NGOKETUNJIA: NDOP	Ndop	16
		Babessi	20
		Balikumbat	11
7	MOMO: MBENGWI	Mbengwi	13
		Njikwa	15
		Ngie (Andek)	17
		Batibo	16
		Widikum	16



Source: National Institute of Statistics of Cameroon Statistical Yearbook for the North West Region, 2018 Edition

The data collected was limited to this geographical location and the responses were limited to persons who are living in these areas.

B. METHODOLOGY

Methodology and Survey Design/Implementation

The baseline survey was designed to gather comprehensive and accurate data on the existing local mediation structures and the involvement of women in these structures across the North West Region of Cameroon. The survey utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure a thorough understanding of the context.

Structured questionnaires were administered to key informants to gather quantifiable data on various aspects of mediation structures and women's participation. The Questionnaire was designed using the Kobo Collect Toolbox. The questionnaire, made up of nine questions and follow up questions using a skip logic into four sections:

- ❖ Section A: Introduction & Demographic Data
- ❖ Section B: Understanding of Mediation Processes/Institutions within the Community
- ❖ Section C: Role of Women in Ensuring Peace in the Community either as Individuals or within Institutions
- ❖ Section D: Appreciation & Feedback

The Questionnaire included both open ended and close-ended questions to collect both qualitative and quantitative data as a way of increasing reliability in meeting the objectives.

Trained enumerators within the seven Divisions in the North West administered it and a breakdown to the 34 subdivisions to identified Key Informant Interviewers (KII): Traditional councils, Quarter Heads, Religious Leaders, Women Leaders, and Renowned Social Groups. The data collectors were provided with detailed instructions and support to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection.

Sample Design and Selection

The sample design was carefully crafted to ensure representation from various segments of the community, with a focus on key stakeholders involved in mediation and peacebuilding processes. The target population included individuals who play significant roles in community mediation and peacebuilding. These individuals were categorized into five main groups: religious leaders, traditional council members, women leaders, leaders of renowned social groups, and quarter heads. 15 key informants were selected from each of the 34 subdivisions, resulting in a total sample size of 510 respondents. This sample size was deemed sufficient to provide a comprehensive overview of the mediation structures and women's participation across the region.

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants who have substantial knowledge and experience in community mediation and peacebuilding.

Selection Criteria:

- ❖ Religious Leaders: Individuals who hold significant positions in religious institutions and are involved in mediating conflicts within their communities.
- ❖ Traditional Council Members: Members of traditional councils who are responsible for resolving disputes and maintaining peace within their communities.
- ❖ Women Leaders: Influential women in the community who are actively involved in peacebuilding and mediation efforts.
- ❖ Leaders of Renowned Social Groups: Leaders of prominent social groups who have a stake in maintaining peace and harmony within the community.
- ❖ Quarter Heads: Local leaders who oversee the welfare of their respective quarters and are involved in mediating conflicts at the grassroots level.

Questionnaire Development & Pilot

The questionnaire was developed with the objective of capturing comprehensive data on the existing mediation structures and the role of women in peacebuilding within the North West Region of Cameroon. The development process involved the following steps: An extensive review of existing literature and similar surveys was conducted to identify key themes and variables relevant to the study. Input was sought from peacebuilding experts, local authorities, and community leaders to ensure that the questions were contextually relevant and comprehensive. Questions were

designed to cover various aspects of mediation structures, women's participation, challenges faced, and opportunities for capacity building. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data and was deployed on Kobo collect.

Before the full-scale survey implementation, a pilot test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and clarity of the questionnaire. The Questionnaire was piloted in typical Urban Areas; Semi Urban Areas and Rural Areas representing different demographic and socio-political contexts within the North West Region. The pilot survey was administered to a small sample of respondents (30) from the target groups. Based on the feedback from the pilot test, necessary revisions were made to the questionnaire to address any ambiguities, improve question clarity, and ensure that all relevant aspects were covered.

Overview of Training of Enumerators

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected, a comprehensive training program was conducted for the 14 data collectors who would be administering the survey. The enumerators were trained on; Understanding the Survey Objectives, Navigating the Kobo tool and detailing going through every question on how to ask and record responses, Ethical Considerations and emphasis was placed on the importance of data quality.

Data Collection Process

The data collection was conducted over a period of one month across the 34 subdivisions in the North West Region of Cameroon. Data collectors coordinated with local authorities and community leaders to schedule interviews and ensure smooth access to respondents. Enumerators conducted face-to-face interviews with key informants using the structured questionnaire and filling in data using the Kobo collect Toolbox online and Offline and monitored on a daily basis by the MEAL desk. A daily flash report was submitted to ensure accuracy of data and instantly handle challenges. A total of 519 Responses were collected as opposed to the 510 Targetted. From the disaggregation of targeted respondent groups, 21% respondents were Women Leaders; 21% Renowned Social Groups; 20% Religious Leaders while 19% respondents were both quarter heads and Leaders of Traditional Councils.

Data Validation

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected, a rigorous validation process was implemented; Double-Entry Verification between the Kobo tool and the Daily Flash report. Discrepancies between the entries were identified and resolved through verification with the Kobo tool. Enumerators were consulted to verify and correct any discrepancies. Selected responses were cross verified with respondents through follow-up calls. At the end of cleaning and Validation, 517 responses were validated.

Data Quality Assurance and Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the quality of the data was a critical aspect of the survey process. Enumerators received comprehensive training, and their work was closely supervised to maintain high standards of data collection. Detailed protocols and guidelines were followed to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection, recording, and analysis. Regular audits and quality checks were conducted throughout the data collection and analysis phases to identify and address any issues promptly.

Ethical considerations were paramount in the survey design and implementation. All respondents were provided with detailed information about the survey's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Written and verbal informed consent was obtained before proceeding with interviews. All respondent information was kept confidential, and data was anonymized to protect their identities. Efforts were made to ensure that the survey did not cause any harm or discomfort to respondents. All enumerators signed an ethical standard procedure and were monitored on strict adherence.

C. SURVEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

All data was collected digitally using mobile devices online and offline and uploaded to a central aggregate platform using Kobo Collect Toolbox. The data was cleaned and validated. Frequency tables, measures of central tendency and charts were generated to show frequency and percentages of variables.

This baseline survey covered 517 Key Informants in 34 Sub divisions of the 7 Divisions in the North West Region covering over 110 Quarters/Communities with each respondent giving their consent.

I. Demographic Profile of Respondents

- The survey results indicated that 52% of respondents (268) were male and 48% were female (249). About 3% of respondents were

IDPs, while 87% were Permanent residents/hosts and the remainder were returnees (8%) and visitors 2%.

- The age group of the respondents reflected that 171 were middle-aged adults (26-44years) giving a percentage of 33%; 252 were matured adults with a percentage of 49 and 16% that is 82 Respondents were above 60.
- In line with Disability Inclusiveness and MOHCAM disability inclusion policy, respondents showed that 9% (45 out of 517 interviewed) identified as persons living with disability. Out of these 45, 18 were Male while 27 were Female.
- According to this Residence status, 453 Respondents indicated

that they have lived in their communities for more than 10 years. Respondents had lived in their communities between 5 to 9 years, 11 said they had lived between 1 to 4 years while 3 said they were in the communities for less than a year. Over 95% of respondents have been living in the community long enough that is 4 years and above to understand the processes within these communities and as such they are in a reliable position to provide information relating to these processes at the level of their communities.

- According to the survey, Over 79% of the Respondents are members of Mainstream Protestant Denominational churches

(Presbyterian, Catholic & Baptist).

- 435 Respondents that is 84% responded that they had key leadership positions within their communities while 82 respondents that is 16% said they did not have any leadership positions. amongst the 517 respondents, 472 have been involved in peace processes at community level giving participation rate of 91% and 9% of respondents have not participated in peace processes.

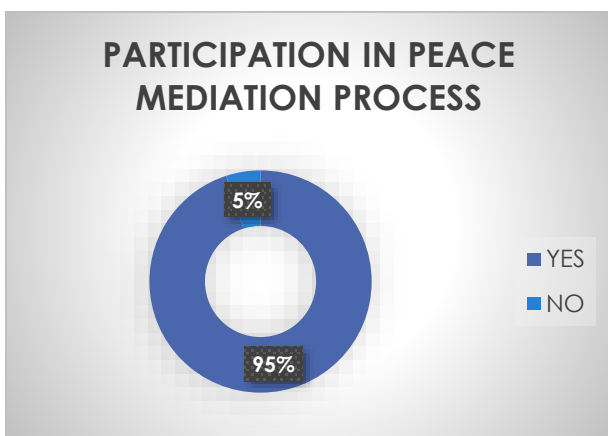
II. Peace Processes and Institutions within communities

The survey in this section sought to establish the understanding and practice of peace processes at the level of the communities and the

participation of these Targeted Key informants in the active participation and follow up of these processes. Below is the documentation of their responses.

a. Participation in Peace Mediation Process

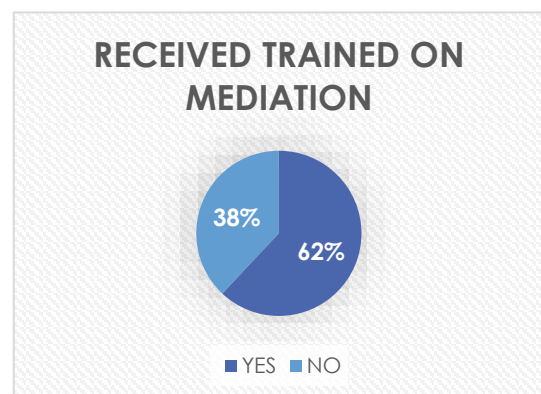
Amongst 517 respondents, 490 respondents giving a percentage of 95, indicated that they have helped to resolve conflicts in the community while 27 that is 5% said they have not been part of a conflict resolution process.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

b. Trained on Mediation

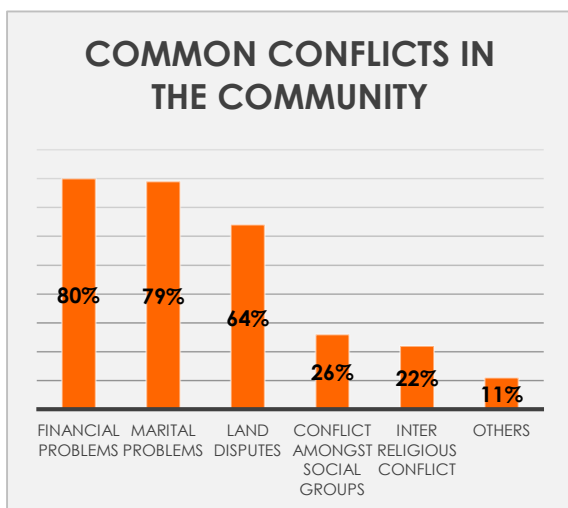
Of these 490 respondents, who have been part of a peace mediation process, 62% that is 306 respondents have never received any training to function as mediators while 38%, 184 respondents affirmed that they have received some coaching on mediation. This highlights the need for training and capacity building of women.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

c. Common Conflicts in the Community

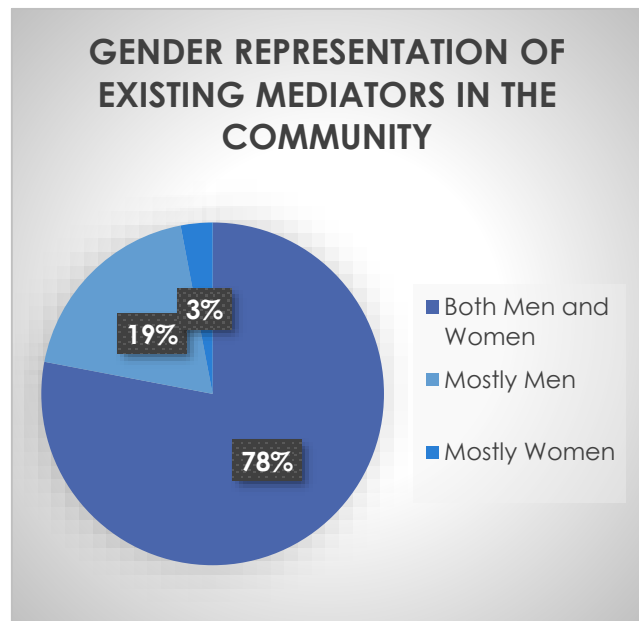
The results show that the major common conflicts in the communities is around financial issues, Marital Problems and Land disputes (80%, 79% and 64%) of the 517 respondents. Other factors like inter-religious conflict, conflict within social groups and others were also noted.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

d. Existence of Individual Mediators in the Community

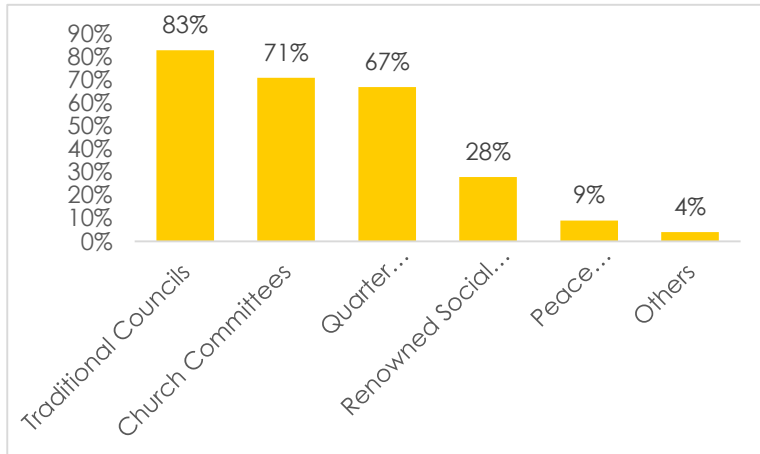
Understanding the leaders understanding on mediation and the present realities gives context to the subject. 90% that is 463 respondents affirmed that there are persons in communities that help to solve conflicts when they arise. Following up the gender representation of these individuals, 78% respondents that is 360 respondents indicated that these individuals are both men and women; 90 respondents thought these are mostly men.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

e. Peace Structures in the Communities

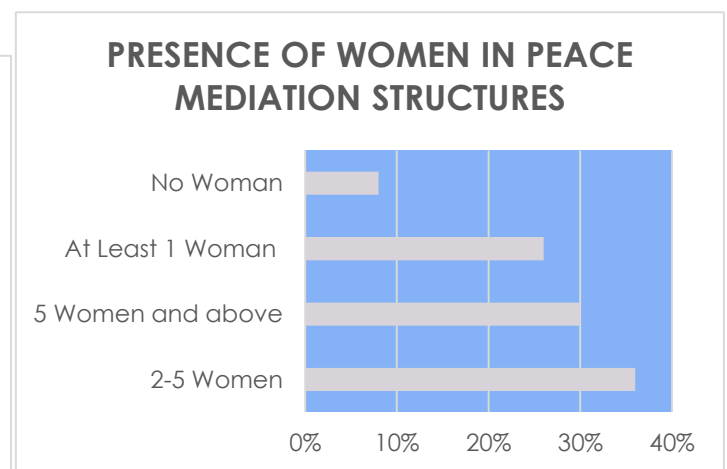
88% (458) of the 517 respondents affirmed that they exist peace mediation structures in their communities. They indicated that the prevalent peace mediation structures that exist in their communities are Traditional Councils, Religious Institutions and Quarter Management Committees (83%, 71% & 67% respectively) of the 458 Respondents.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

f. Presence of Women in Peace Mediation Structures

The results showed the most of these peace mediation structures in the communities (71%) have more than 11 members in the group but unfortunately, 61% of the respondents affirmed that these structures have less than 5 women that belong.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

g. Knowledge of Peace Structures by Community Members

73% of the respondents reported that members are normally sensitized about the existence of peace structures while 34% report that most people are aware of the structures only when problem arises.

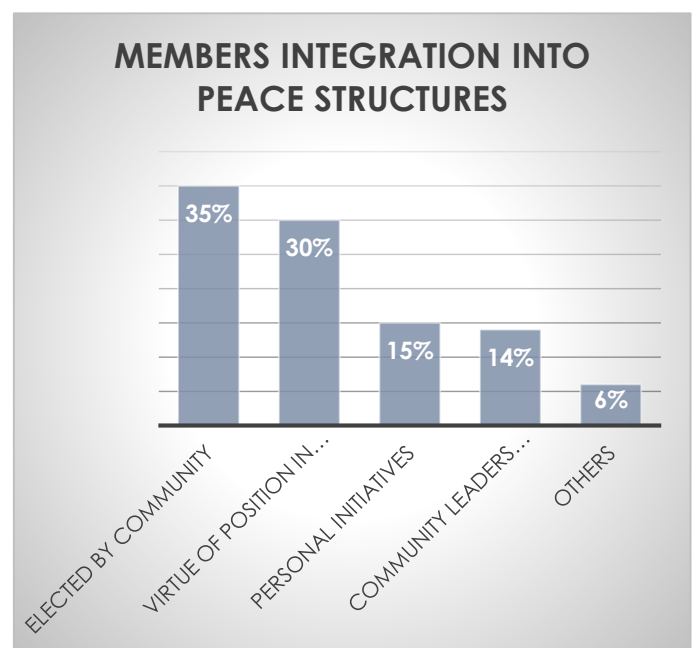


Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

h. Members Integration to Peace Mediation Structures

35% of the respondents (182) say most members who are part of peace structures are mostly elected which gives some fairness to the process.

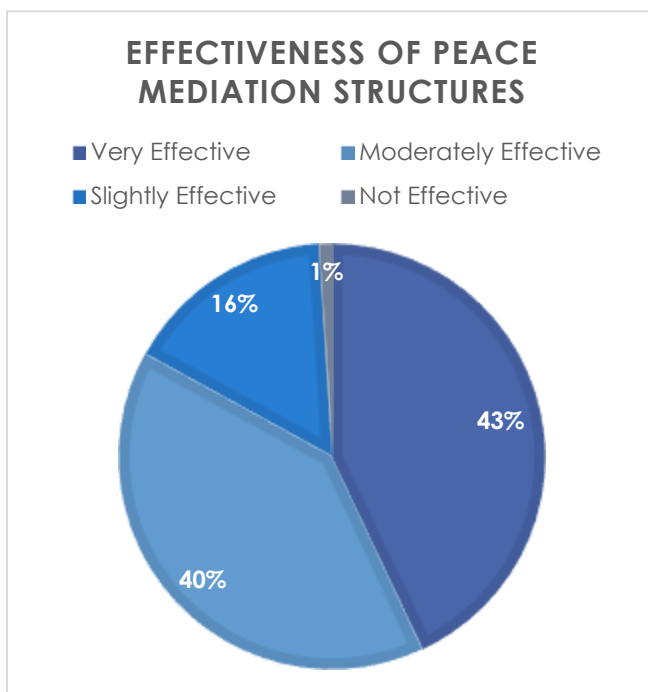
30% of them say people most at times just become part of the structures based on their position in the communities while 15% take initiatives to join the groups.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

i. Benefits & Effectiveness of the Peace Mediation Structures

99% of the respondents testify that these mediation structures are helpful; this lays emphasis on the need of these structures in the communities due to the pivotal role they play.

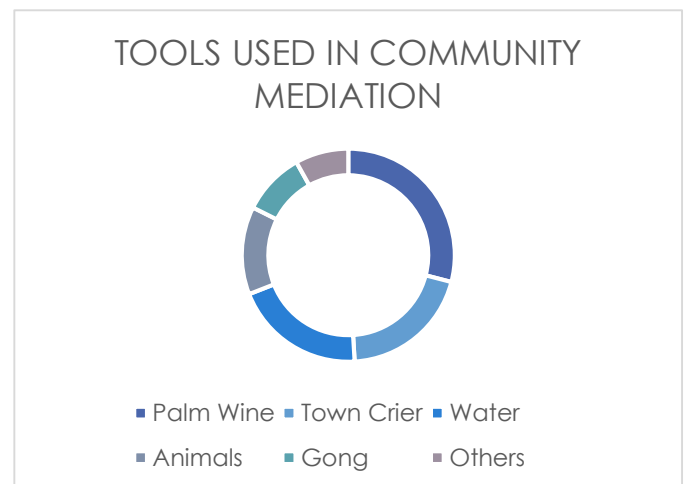


Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

Out of these 99% respondents (512), Just 43% of the respondents testify that these structures are

very effective. This indicates more work has to be done to strengthen these structures.

j. Tools Used in Community Mediation Processes



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

The results show that several tools that are used during community mediation process notably Water, palm wine, peace plants, Town crier The Bible, Peace offerings, Water from trees, Money, Food and Money (payment of fines from the person at fault), Animals (fowls, goats) etc. Every

community has their tools they use for mediation processes.

Notably, 60% of the respondents testify that Palm wine is mostly used for Mediation Processes; Also, Water and Town criers are used 42% of respondents.

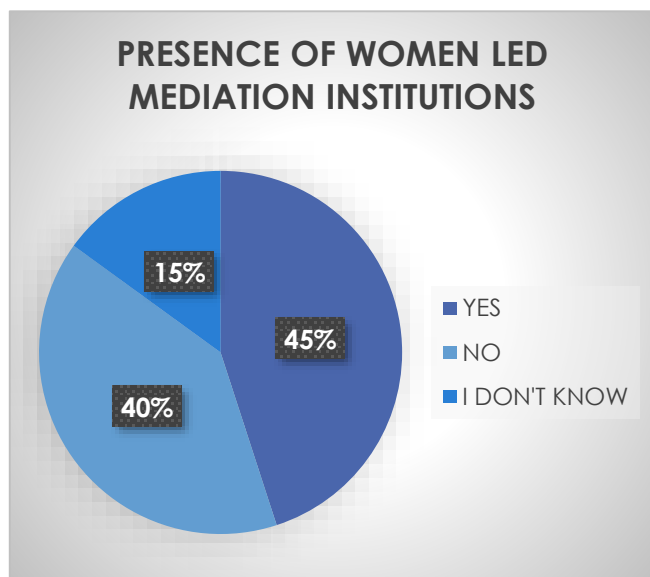
As to whether women are allowed to use these Peace mediation tools, 42% respondents answered in the affirmative, 27% responded in the negative while 31% stated that sometimes they can and sometimes they cannot depending on the tool.

Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

III. Role of Women in Ensuring Peace in the Community as Individuals and within Institutions

K. Presence of Women Mediators in the Communities

78% of the respondents affirmed that Women mediators exist in the Communities but 17% say they do not exist. While 40% of respondents say there are no women led organizations or institutions that act as Mediators, Over 20% with no Knowledge there are Women or women led organizations acting as mediators. This underplays with role women played in the community



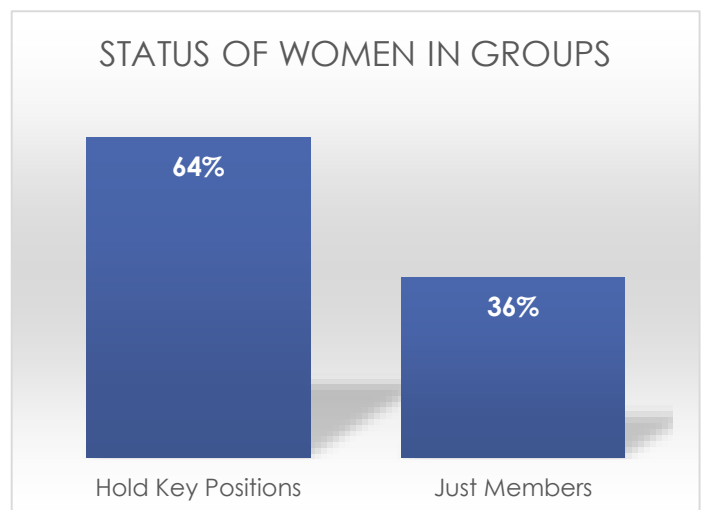
Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

L. Reasons women are not part of Mediation Processes

Findings from respondents who said there were no women mediators or did not know of their presence showed that 51% of respondents reported the no involvement of women is due to women not being considered as decision makers in the communities. Also 49% of the respondents say women are not permitted to be where men are and some traditional councils did not allow women to be part of them. In addition, women are mostly given minor conflicts and major conflicts for men. They also mentioned the ongoing crisis has disrupted most local mediation structures that are non-existent and others insist women have no idea on mediation.

M. Role of Women in Mediation Structures

The 78% of respondents who affirmed that women mediators exist in the communities highlighted that these mediators are proactive and participate in resolving conflicts and they express themselves well and sometimes take initiatives. This was affirmed by over 95% of the respondents.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

64% of the respondents highlighted that these women held key leadership positions why 36% said they were just members.

Indicating when women are at the Peace table, they can be influential

N. Importance of women in Peace Processes

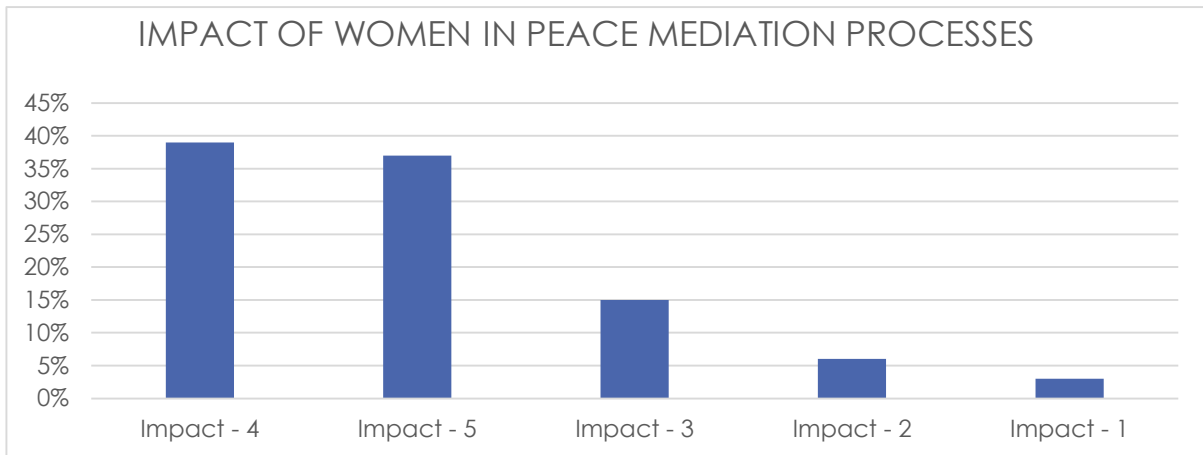
Women play a pivotal role in peace processes as they are natural peacebuilders, taking up mediation roles has always been easier for them. This was attested by 71% of the respondents (370) who said is very important for women to be part of the peace mediation process, and 19% of them saying is extremely important, however 10% of the respondents still feel is not really important for women to be part of the peace mediation Process.

O. Women's Impact in Mediation Process

Rating on a scale of 1 to 5 on respondents conviction of the impact and significant contribution women can

make if they are part of the mediation process, 39% (204) respondents rated 4, 36% (189) respondents rated 5 and 15% rated 3 with 10% rated 2 and below.

This indicates women can create significant change and shift in the mediation process if women are part of the processes.



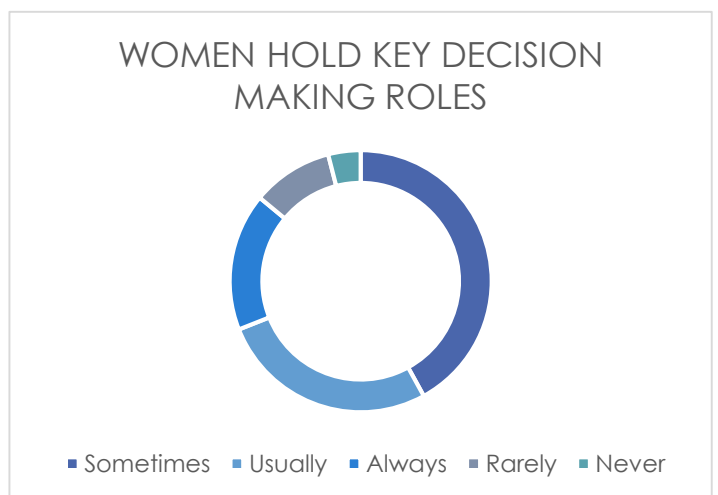
Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

P. Women Holding Key Positions in the community

They community social and cultural norms can affect the role women played in peace building processes. This question was to seek to understand the community dynamics when it comes to women roles.

Findings showed that in most communities as reported by 41% of the respondents women only sometimes are allowed to hold key decision making roles while 30% of the respondents report they usually hold key decision

making roles and 17% says it always happen. However, 10% of the respondents says it rarely occurs but 4% of the respondents affirmatively report it never happens in their community that women are given key decision-making roles.



Source: Baseline Survey, WMP in NWR, Cameroon 2024

D. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Interpretation of Findings

The baseline survey conducted highlights significant insights into the existing mediation structures and the role of women in these peace mediation processes in communities in the North West Region of Cameroon.

a. Mediation Structures and Their Effectiveness

The findings revealed that traditional councils, religious institutions, and Quarter Management Committees are the primary mediating bodies within the communities, present in 83%, 71% and 67% of the communities respectively. These bodies are considered highly effective by over 88% of community members, demonstrating the significant role they play in local conflict resolution. Despite women being highly active in informal mediation roles, their participation in formal structures remain low, with only 35% of women involved in these roles. This discrepancy underscores the need to address cultural norms and gender biases that limit women's formal involvement.

The survey also found that while 95% of respondents have been involved in conflict resolution, only 35% of women have received any form of training. The gap highlights the critical need for targeted capacity building initiatives to enhance women effectiveness in mediation.

b. Role of Women in Peace Mediation Processes

Despite the established presence and effectiveness of traditional and religious mediation structures, the survey reveals that women's involvement in these processes is limited. Women's representation in traditional councils and other mediation bodies is significantly lower compared to their male counterparts. However, where women are involved, their contribution is highly valued, especially in the context-driven peace initiatives. This was revealed from the findings showing 65% of women in formal mediation structures are proactive and actively participate in the mediation process, indicating their potential to significantly influence peace processes if given more opportunities. Over 50% of leaders noted that it was not a usual thing for women to hold key decision-making roles in the community even though with the confidence over 74% of the leaders have in these women underlying the gender and cultural bias. Women's unique perspectives and approaches to conflict resolution are seen as complimentary to the existing efforts, highlighting a significant gap and opportunity for increasing participation in mediation processes. Increasing awareness about the importance of women's roles in peacebuilding and advocating for their inclusion can help change cultural perceptions and reduce gender biases.

II. Implications to the Project

Strategic Implications

The findings suggest a strategic necessity to increasing women more systematically into existing mediation structures. Strengthening the capacity of women mediators and ensuring their active participation in traditional councils and other mediation bodies could enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of peace processes. Facilitating a collaboration between traditional and religious institutions and women mediators to leverage their strengths and improve overall effectiveness should be a priority. Strategies to address cultural norms and gender biases should be implemented. This can be achieved through community engagement initiatives, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts that promote gender equality. Encouraging male allies and influential community leaders to support women's participation in peace processes can help shift cultural norms and reduce resistance. This strategic integration aligns with the broader goals of the UNSCR 1325 agenda, promoting gender equality in peacebuilding efforts.

Programmatic Implications

The project must focus on capacity-building initiatives tailored specifically for women. This includes training programs to develop skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, and leadership. Establishing strong linkages between women mediators and existing peace structures is crucial. Networking events, workshops and collaborative projects can facilitate the integration

of women mediators into formal peace processes. The project should foster connections between women mediators and stakeholders at sub-divisional levels, divisional levels, regional and national levels to enhance their influence and participation in formal mediation processes. A robust monitoring and evaluation framework is essential to track progress, measure impact and identify areas for improvement. Regular feedback from community members, women mediators and other stakeholders will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the projects strategies.

Policy Implications

The survey highlights the need for Policy interventions that mandate the inclusion of women in mediation processes. Policies at both the local and national levels should support and enforce women's participation in traditional councils and other peacebuilding institutions. Furthermore, policies should aim to provide legal backing to women's roles in mediation, ensuring their contributions are recognized and valued.

III. Recommendations to Stakeholders

To Government Bodies

Government bodies at both the local and national levels play a crucial role in institutionalizing women's participation in peace mediation processes. They should develop and enforce policies that mandate the inclusion of women in mediation and conflict resolution structures. This can be achieved by setting quotas or specific requirements for women's representation in traditional councils, religious institutions, and other

community-based mediation bodies. Additionally, government bodies should allocate resources to support capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing women's skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, and leadership. Providing financial and logistical support for training programs and creating legal frameworks that recognize and protect women's roles in mediation will further reinforce their participation.

To Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs are pivotal in empowering women and advocating for gender-inclusive peace processes. They should focus on providing comprehensive training and capacity-building programs tailored to women, enabling them to effectively engage in mediation and conflict resolution. NGOs should also work to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding, both within communities and at higher policy levels. By creating platforms for dialogue and knowledge exchange, NGOs can facilitate the integration of women into traditional mediation structures. Furthermore, NGOs should advocate for policy changes that promote gender inclusivity and work in partnership with government bodies and community leaders to implement these policies effectively.

To Community Leaders

Community leaders, including those within traditional councils and religious institutions, have a significant influence on the acceptance and effectiveness of women mediators. They should actively promote the inclusion of women in all levels of mediation and conflict resolution

processes. This involves recognizing the unique contributions women can make to peacebuilding and creating an enabling environment that encourages their participation. Community leaders should also support training and capacity-building initiatives for women and ensure that they are provided with the necessary resources and opportunities to engage in mediation. By championing the involvement of women, community leaders can help shift cultural norms and perceptions, making gender-inclusive mediation a standard practice.

CHALLENGES

The data collection process encountered several challenges that influenced the scope and effectiveness of the baseline survey. Firstly, cultural and gender biases within communities often hindered women's full participation in mediation processes. These deep-seated beliefs can be resistant to change and require long-term strategies to address. Secondly, logistical issues such as difficult terrain and limited accessibility to remote areas posed significant hurdles for data collection, affecting the comprehensiveness of the survey. Additionally, the political instability in the North West Region created a volatile environment, sometimes delaying or obstructing data collection efforts.

CONCLUSION

The baseline survey of the Women Mediation Project has provided valuable insights into the existing mediation structures and the role of women in these processes within the North West Region of Cameroon. Traditional councils, religious institutions, and quarter management committees are pivotal in maintaining peace, yet women's participation in these bodies remains limited. The survey underscores the critical need for strategic interventions to integrate women into mediation processes, enhancing their leadership and decision-making capabilities. Addressing cultural barriers and providing targeted training are essential for fostering an inclusive environment where women can contribute effectively to peacebuilding efforts. The findings from this survey will guide the project's implementation,

ensuring it aligns with the broader goals of the UNSCR 1325 agenda and Cameroon's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Women Mediation Project is a significant step towards achieving gender equality in peace and conflict resolution processes in Cameroon. By empowering women mediators and integrating them into traditional and formal mediation structures, the project aims to create a more inclusive and effective peacebuilding framework. The baseline survey has highlighted both the opportunities and challenges in this endeavor, providing a roadmap for future interventions. The success of this project depends on the collective efforts of government bodies, NGOs, and community leaders to support and champion the role of women in mediation. As the project progresses, continuous monitoring and adaptation will be crucial to address emerging challenges and leverage new opportunities for promoting sustainable peace and stability in the region.

ANNEXES

- Survey Questionnaire
- Anonymized list of survey respondents
- Picture of Field Activities

PICTURES





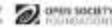
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