



## **Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar**

Series 11

**Conversation with Barrister Gladys Mbuya (Cameroon)**

**Cameroon Anglophone Conflict**

The Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism - Africa (CVPP) is a non-profit network of women professionals providing services in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict, including ethnic and religious conflicts around the world. CVPP also builds capacities. through a Peace and Pluralism approach, equipping women to contribute to preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict in decision making roles. We offer highly effective consulting services to advance global peace and security.

The WhatsApp Workshop Seminar Series began in the wake of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic has hit the world's vulnerable and most marginalized hardest. These are the people members of CVPP work with. Members of CVPP decided to meet this unprecedented challenge by speaking to each other every week. Sharing stories, learning new skills from each other all through the WhatsApp platform, to enable reach to those of our members without access to facilities such as Zoom or Skype.

***Seminar Series Convener:*** Shama Shah, conflict analyst

***Moderator: Advocate*** Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Senior program officer with the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA Uganda).

***Presenter:*** Gladys Mbuya, Barrister – At – Law and a Human Rights advocate

**Seminar Series Rapporteur:** Selina Makokha

**Participants:** Members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa

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### **Shama Shah, Kenya: Introduction**

Hi everyone!

A warm and hearty welcome to the 11<sup>th</sup> Seminar Series.

After a short break, we've resumed our sessions. Our format for the second half is a combination of thematic and country specific discussions. To begin, we'll be talking about the **Cameroon Anglophone Conflict**. I shared the bios of the presenter and moderator earlier. Our presenter today is Barrister Gladys Mbuya, Barrister At-Law and a Human Rights advocate, from Cameroon.

Welcome, Barrister Gladys. It is a pleasure having you here today. Let us engage her in a lively discussion. As always, kindly remember our CVPP guidelines - Before we speak or respond, we ask ourselves; is it kind? Is it necessary? Is it true?

With this, I hand over to today's moderator, Barrister Lillian Ruhweza (who is from Uganda).

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** The tension between the English-speaking Cameroonians and the west central African national's French speaking government stretches as far back as the colonial rule nearly 60 years. At the heart of the tension is the desire to form their own independent state. Here to help us appreciate the situation on ground is Barrister Gladys. She is a Barrister-At-Law and Human Rights advocate. Barrister, we're happy to have you here and eager to hear from you. The floor is yours.

**Samia El Hashmi, CVPP Chairperson, Sudan:** Before you handed over to the moderator... I welcome you all... To this seminar

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** Please bear with me dear sisters Shama and myself are sorting out a technical problem

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Thank you, I join Samia in welcoming you all to today's seminar.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** Hello honourable sisters of this very important forum. It is an immense pleasure for me to present to you this afternoon on the Cameroon Anglo-conflict. But before I dive into the conflict proper, I deem it necessary to give you all a brief history of my country leading to what is now called Anglo-phone crisis. Cameroon has a heterogeneous population comprised of over 250 ethnic groups with distinct languages and customs. The estimated total population of Cameroon is currently 24.7 million people spread over 10 regions. An estimated 4 to 5 million live in the South West and North West regions. These regions were formerly under the British colonial rule. The remaining majority of the population live in the Franco-phone region i.e. areas formerly under French colonial rule.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** As Gladys is sorting out the technical challenge she is facing, I urge all of us to think about the topic at hand and prepare some questions for our facilitator.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** In the year 1884 when Africa was portioned, Cameroon

was given to the Germans which then included Northern Cameroon and Southern Cameroon. After the First World War, Cameroon was taken from them and portioned between France and Britain; with Britain taking the west of Cameroon and France taking the East of Cameroon. These two regions were placed under the League of Nations and called Protectorate of League of Nations. Britain for easier administration, divided the portion handed to her into two parts, namely Northern Cameroon and Southern Cameroon.

In the year 1945 and after the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and the formation of United Nations Organisation, League of Nations, protectorates became trust territories under the UN, thus the minority Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons together were one Trust territory of the United Nations under Britain while the rest of Cameroon was a Trust territory under France. On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January 1960, the trust territory under France gained independence and was called La republique du Cameroun, while southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons, were still a trust territory under Britain. A joint Anglo-French administration was put in place. The British administered the Northern and Southern Cameroons as part of Nigeria. The official boundary between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon remained in place for 55 years until the plebiscite that came in 1961. With the decolonisation process in Africa, the Northern part of the territory of the British controlled Cameroon became part of Nigeria. The Southern part became La republique du Cameroun.

The United Nations later decided to grant independence to both Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons. On the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1961, instead of granting this independence the same way they did to East Cameroon under France, the United Nations decided to organise a plebiscite in Southern Cameroon where they asked the question, 'Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the republic of Cameroon or by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria?' This plebiscite did not provide the option of total and separate independence for either the Northern or Southern Cameroon. The removal of this option from the plebiscite remains a heated issue of contention in the Anglophone Cameroon to this date.

The result of 1961 plebiscite was that Southern Cameroon voted to achieve independence by joining La republique du Cameroun while the Northern voted to

achieve independence by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The United Nations and Britain were to accompany Southern Cameroon to work out modalities of joining La republique du Cameroun which was already an independent country with its territory demarcated. The Britain abandoned Southern Cameroon to themselves. And on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1961, the Southern Cameroon was granted independence. Meanwhile La republique du Cameroun's own Independence Day was 1960.

So here we were with 2 countries, 2 independence days and 2 territories well demarcated. Southern Cameroon met with La republique du Cameroun in 1961 in Foumban and came up with the Federal constitution now called the Foumban constitution. In that constitution, it was recognized that Cameroon was made up of 2 countries that came together. The Southern Cameroon government and House of Assembly were maintained. Whilst the government of La republique du Cameroun was also maintained. There was even a clause of the said constitution which said no amendment of the said constitution that alters the federal nature of the new country was to be permitted.

A new country made up of East and West Cameroon was born and called Federal Republic of Cameroon with a president and a vice president. A bilingual country with French and English as official languages. La republique du Cameroun was now called East Cameroon. The southern Cameroon was now called West Cameroon. Two federal states. However, the institutional autonomy of the Anglophone regions was only maintained for approximately 10 years after which it was gradually eroded through a series of actions led by the former president Ahmadou Ahidjo of blessed memory. President Ahmadou Ahidjo returned from a trip he made to France and on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1972 he announced in the federal house of assembly that it was expensive to run 2 federative states and that he had decided to go to the people to seek their permission to change the form of the state. Whilst Cameroon parliamentarians tried to protest but try as they may, they were suppressed. And on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1972, President Ahmadou Ahidjo organised a referendum and the results show that the people voted for a United Republic of Cameroon. The abolition of federalism was met with protest, but protestors were arrested and imprisoned.

From there, institutions from Southern Cameroon were being abolished. And to

compound issues in February 1984, the name of the country was changed once more from United Republic of Cameroon to La republique du Cameroun and one of the stars on the flag removed leaving one star. French Cameroon by this action simply went back to their name at independence. Some activists viewed this as an act of cessation on the part of La Republique du Cameroun from the union. They therefore coined a new name for Southern Cameroon called the Ambazonia republic.

**Tamador A Khalid, Sudan:** Greetings to all

What was the main reason for South Cameroon to join the French Republic rather than fight to remain independent. Understanding that it was formerly Anglophone?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** Since then there has only been cosmetic peace in Cameroon. I can assure you my sisters. As all Southern Cameroonians perceived all these changes as a way to annihilate Southern Cameroons or assimilate them. The present conflict that we are talking about now, which began in the year 2016 was only a culmination of the burning anger that has been building in the hearts of Southern Cameroonians over the years. Several Anglophone movements have been developed over the subsequent decades calling for the Anglophone problem to be addressed. This includes the Southern Cameroon National Council, the Free West Cameroon movement, The Southern Cameroon Restoration Movement, Cameroon Anglophone movement and now the Ambazonia movement.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Thank you for your question Gladys will respond to your question shortly.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** now talking about the present conflict called Cameroon Anglophone conflict. I would love to inform this house that socio-political issues in North-west and South-west of Cameroon have been a matter of contention throughout the post colonial period. It only intensified in the year 2016 when lawyers and teachers protested against marginalisation and it later shifted to an armed conflict with separatist fighters seeking independence for the country's minority regions.

**Salim Musa Omar, Nigeria:** Thank you very much for your brief history of the

Cameroon. It is clear that some of the challenges faced now are structural as a result of some historical antecedents. Be that as it may, the problem in the northern part seems to be of greater challenge and is a threat to the corporate existence of the country. What are the core issues that are propelling the agitation for cessation of the northern part of country? Ambazonia if I'm right?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** We all know that talking about this present conflict, it is written everywhere that the conflict began when teachers and lawyers went on strike. And how did lawyers come into the picture? I will explain to this house. My dear sisters Cameroon contemporary legal landscape has been influenced by colonialism for a very long time. We have a bi-jural system with the English common law procedure which is accusatorial operating in the two Anglophone regions of the North West and the South west and the French civil law procedure, which is inquisitorial, operating in the 8 Francophone regions. The plurality of these rules in the legal system have always posed theoretical and practical problems like difficulty in unifying the legal process.

The bi-jural nature of the country also brought about conflict of laws. The government of the country in a bid to harmonise criminal laws and some other laws in the country decided to put aside most of the common law tenets that we had. Before then criminal matters were done in the North West and South-West using the penal code and the evidence ordinance. Meanwhile in the 8 other regions only the penal code was used. Interpretation of the harmonised laws within the south west region was no longer common law inspired. Practice directives were given to magistrates to dismiss the applications brought by council or litigants by way of motion on the grounds that motions were no longer part of our laws as far as Cameroon criminal procedure court was concerned. Lawyers practising in these two regions expressed their discontent and tried hard to make the point that motions meant the same thing as application, but no one listened to them.

Dear sisters it is worthy of note that although British Southern Cameroon was unified with former French Cameroon following the plebiscite, Anglophone Cameroonians retained a form of institution autonomy through a federal system of governance which involved a degree of the rule of law and maintenance of educational and judicial systems established under British rule. Judicial processes and proceedings in

the common law jurisdictions are conducted in the English language. But changing from the Federal republic of Cameroon to La republique du Cameroun. The government now embarked on a massive transfer of civil law trained magistrates to common law jurisdiction. And some of these magistrates went as far as reading judgements in French. Lawyers again protested against this. They issued memoranda which were distributed to the authorities that be, but the problem was still not solved.

Now as to the teachers, the teachers in Cameroon like the lawyers kept expressing longstanding grievances against the presence of Francophone teachers who could barely speak or teach English in universities, primary and secondary schools in the Anglophone regions. Teachers considered this as an act of un-teaching their children, the mere fact that somebody who could barely read or write or speak English is brought to teach in an English school not as if he was coming he was coming to teach French was actually an act of un-teaching our children.

This recent conflict begun with strikes from Anglophone lawyers and teachers in protests to perceived government to marginalise traditional practices within Anglophone courts and schools. In response to the unrest the government used force which led to escalation of tension and demands. Since 2016 protests, the conflict has become increasingly violent. In October 2016, Anglophone lawyers and teachers went on strike. They demanded return of the federal system of government. Rather than engaging in dialogue with the protestors, the Cameroon government responded with a crackdown dissent. This led to escalation of tension which resulted in several deaths and destruction of property belonging to both government and civilians.

The government then arrested some moderate voices in the Anglophone movement. This radicalised the remaining leaders and they shifted their goals from the reinstatement of federalism to full cessation from Cameroon and creation of an independent Anglophone state. By October 2017 a number of cessation groups formally declared the Anglophone regions independent of Cameroon and renamed the region Ambazonia. Since this declaration, non state armed groups and government forces have violently clashed across the Anglophone territories. During



this conflict also the non state armed groups have waged a violent campaign against education. They have declared school boycotts and asked nobody should send children to school. In a bid to enforce the school boycotts in the 2 Anglophone regions, the separatists have killed, kidnapped and maimed students, parents and education officials for not complying with their demand to keep schools shut down. The security situation continues to be of serious concern with civilian casualties, destruction of property, abductions, sexual violence, torture, burning down houses and property.

Many schools and medical facilities have been destroyed. For the past 3 years, children in some areas are not going to school. Military people have been killed and the military usually revenge by burning down houses and whole villages. Since the armed conflict begun, kidnapping is viewed by the non-state armed group as a means to intimidate the local communities to keep schools closed thus force cessation boycott on education. Many government workers have had to pay very heavy price for going to work whenever the non state armed groups call on a boycott. Employees of a famous rubber plantation have been tortured. Their toes and fingers have been cut off as punishment for working in the plantation despite calls by the non state armed groups that nobody should go to work on those plantations. Humanitarian workers have also been killed.

**Samia El Hashmi, Sudan:** Is there any initiative(s) from civil society to address this conflict?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** During this conflict, we have experienced the fact that there are some key events that normally heighten the tension. The tension in these 2 regions and the tension in this conflict are deeply historical and have been wrongfully addressed to date and are likely to undermine any prospects of a sustainable solution. Tensions generally grow around key events relevant to the conflict. For example, every 22th February which is particularly significant as it is annually marked national youth day and it also doubles as the anniversary of the plebiscite which joint Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun in 1961. On this particular day, each time it's coming up, the non state armed group impose serious lockdowns on this day. They do not want this day to remind them, because to them, that plebiscite

was never accepted by them and was never called for. We also have celebration of National day which comes up every 20<sup>th</sup> May. You'll recall this unity came through a referendum and the question these non state armed groups always ask is, "we do not know the significance of 20<sup>th</sup> May. Why is it called a national day?" This day is highly provocative to them and they are very aggressive whenever the national day comes up. This is because to them, the southern Cameroon's national day should be in January 1961 and not 20<sup>th</sup> May. So, they do not want anything to do with the celebration of 20<sup>th</sup> May. They always commemorate 1<sup>st</sup> October as the day they declared independence of Ambazonia. So, to Ambazonians, 1<sup>st</sup> October is their Independence Day.

Also, when this conflict/crisis begun, the Republic of Cameroon, the government actually arrested some of the leaders of Ambazonia people and jailed them. They arrested them all the way from Nigeria and brought them back to Cameroon, tried and jailed them and were tried. So, each time this was another key event that always heightened tension.

There is equally high tension ahead of every election be it the presidential, parliamentary or municipal. Those days are always lock-down days imposed by the non state armed groups.

Each time the Ambazonian leaders were going to court, the non-state armed groups will impose a lock-down. Each time there are elections, they'll impose a lock down because they say La Republique du Cameroun has no right to come and organise elections in their territory. So, there will be dead ghost towns and you'll see no fly moving outside. Equally when there is a visit of government official to both regions, northwest and southwest, increased tensions and confrontations will be observed. For instance, recently, a government minister was trying to go around the 2 regions to sensitize communities on presidential plan for reconstruction and development. The non state armed groups declared serious lockdowns in both regions and said he wasn't welcomed..... that the war wasn't over, and you cannot start talking about reconstruction when the war isn't over, and people haven't dialogued.

This Cameroon Anglophone conflict has come with enormous consequences. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled the country with others internally displaced. A majority of the displaced are women and children. According to a report

by the United Nations body on the ground, 437,000 people have fled their homes and 32,000 have been forced to seek refuge in the neighbouring Nigeria. Most of this people barely have enough to eat not to talk of decent place to live or access to proper sanitation services. This conflict is ongoing, and the humanitarian situation of the affected population is deteriorating as humanitarian workers are often attacked. A UN body offering humanitarian assistance is threatening to leave Cameroon if attacks continue. Armed separatists have also killed hundreds of members of security forces amidst growing calls for this cessation of the Anglophone regions. Government forces have also committed serious human rights violations including unlawful killings, destruction of property etc.

Vulnerability has been further compounded by limited access to education for children due to bans and attacks on schools by the armed groups. Latest statistics shared by education authorities for the northwest and southwest regions show that as at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, 19% only of public primary schools and 17% only of secondary schools in the two regions are operational. Of the 2 regions, the situation in the northwest is considerably worse with 91% of the primary schools reportedly non operational and only 16% of expected teachers at work. Over 5,000 children have been registered as separated or unaccompanied since 2018. Despite an increase in school attendance in the northwest and southwest in the last quarter of 2020, mostly in urban areas over 70% children remain out of school. This is largely attributed to parents' fear for their safety and as the 3 years crisis shows no sign of resolution.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Are there CSOs that are documenting the conflict as it is going on for proper accountability and redress for all the victims?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** I know an obvious question will be: Have there been any attempts to end this conflict? I will say yes, and I will say no. Yes, because there have been some attempts, but they have been very little. Very little political progress has been made to resolve the conflict. Some prominent clergy men and civil society actors planned to organise an Anglophone general conference set to discuss the crisis and seek for ways to bring back peace but have not been able to do so because of the threats in their lives. The government on its own part organised a Grand National dialogue in a bid to bring back peace but it was not all inclusive and was

ineffective as it did not cause the warring parties to lay down their arms as they are still fighting as we speak.

Women on their part have tried to group themselves and clamour for their voices to be heard and to see how they can put their own contribution on the table to bring back peace, but no one seems to listen to them. You have the likes of groups such as SNOWT-Southwest-Northwest Women Taskforce and CAWOPEM-Cameroon Women's Peace Movement which have been created all in a bid to see how women can contribute to bring peace. But we are still struggling, and the women say they will not give up.

There were calls for a ceasefire even by the UN as COVID-19 pandemic was declared but no one is paying heed to these calls. Even 1 of the separatist groups tried to call for ceasefire but no one is paying heed. So, the Cameroon Anglophone conflict is still very much on. There are still kidnappings, fighting between the non state and the state armed groups and civilians are being caught in the crossfire. The conflict has significantly weakened the educational system in remote areas where structural challenges were already present and there is no end in sight to this conflict.

**Salim Musa, Nigeria:** Does the conflict have any ethnic or religious connotations? This is because of some disturbing narratives about attacks on some Peul/Fulani Communities in Ambazonia.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** Reports show that as at February 2020, 90% of public primary schools, 77% of secondary schools remained closed or non operational in the southwest and northwest regions. Fear of violence has kept parents from sending their children to school and staff and teachers from reporting to work. Amongst these children almost 150,000 have been displaced from their homes which increases their vulnerability.

**Samia El Hashmi, Sudan:** The issue of inclusivity is always a threat and challenge to the efforts of peace talks. How do you see Cameroon people have inclusive process?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** My dear sisters, the future of the children in Northwest

and Southwest regions of Cameroon is at risk. We run the risk of having a lost generation of young people if action is not taken and taken now. Statistics actually indicate more than 855,000 remain out of school. Parents and children need peace so that children can resume their education and reclaim their future. Just the mere fact that many children are out of school, they face the risk of recruitment by armed groups. During this conflict children have now become victims of child marriages, early pregnancies and other forms of exploitation and abuse.

**Florence Mpaayei, Kenya:** Thank you for a very informative analysis of the conflict. Are there voices of reason from the Francophone side such as CSOs/clergy/women groups that can join forces with efforts of those in the Anglophone side?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** One obvious question is why there is there little progress towards ending this crisis? There are many reasons why this crisis is still ravaging these 2 regions. First of all, there is no respect for human rights. There's denial of human rights. Throughout this conflict, representatives from both government and separatists' forces have consistently denied allegations that human violations have been committed by their supporters. Neither side has accepted responsibility for the many abuses, violence, torture and murder that have arisen from the conflict. This makes it very difficult to know where to start. Even the call to dialogue was not inclusive. Despite hopes by some of us moderate Anglophone activists that the talks would have led to the end of this conflict, several major cessation leaders refuse to participate as they thought that it was not fairly organised.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Has there been instances of sexual violence in the conflict?

**Esther Omam, Cameroon:** Well said Barr Gla. That is a sad reality. Sorry busy with a wedding but you are on point.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon:** The separatists' leaders in this conflict still re-confirm their position that only complete cessation will end this conflict and the government of Cameroon is not willing to talk about cessation. So, it makes it very volatile. The peculiarity of the Anglophone Cameroon crisis is that not all the women in Cameroon

feel concerned about the conflict. Since it touches only on 2 regions, the majority of the women in the other 8 regions are indifferent. Again, even the women of the 2 regions who are directly concerned and are directly involved, they are yet to learn how to speak like one person so as to make the peace movement forward.

There are also repeated denials of responsibilities and accusations of false reporting by some of these actors. Such blanket refusal to acknowledge responsibilities for crimes being committed makes progressing forward extremely difficult. This is reflected in difficulties that have arisen in attempted dialogue to date. In all, the conflict is highly complex and there are many diverse groups that may need to be represented to discuss if peace is to be feasibly restored in the regions. The other reason which makes it very difficult is the fact that these diverse groups are not unified. They oppose each other and so it will be a very difficult task uniting them before they can come to a dialogue table.

Parties to these conflicts have failed to heed to repeated global calls for cease fire even as a result of COVID-19 as I said. Civilians continue to be caught in crossfire while some execution of civilians by both the military and non state armed groups is on the rise. Temporary displacement continues to be recorded as civilians flee for safety. Over 15,780 individuals from 2,625 households were reportedly displaced in the Northwest and Southwest regions due to the ongoing violence in the month of June. So, you can begin to imagine. Human Rights Watch estimates that at least 285 civilians have been killed in about 190 incidents since January 2020. In March 2020, one of the separatist's groups even tried to call for a ceasefire, but nobody listened to them. They were given all sorts of names, making it difficult. The fight continues to intensify with the mounting number of casualties and internally displaced persons fleeing from violence.

My beloved sisters we all in this forum are lovers of peace if not we would not be in this forum, but I must confess that Cameroon and its women are suffering. We are going through a lot. Being novices, because every one of you would know that before now, Cameroon had apparently passed off as a peaceful country without people knowing that it was cosmetic peace. So, we had never had an experience of war and that is why we are still grappling. That is why even the women do not know how to

gather themselves together and stays focused like one person and bring down this demonic war that is ravaging our country. Because truly speaking, if women stand like one, they can bring down mountains and I believe in this honourable house where we all are.

**I know there are movers and shakers in this house. I am crying out my heart to you people to kindly come to the aid of Cameroonian women. It is not as if we have not tried but there is something not going on right.**

We need to be guided and directed again how to stand like one woman or man as a tall tree and tell this people that enough is enough. Because when there is war, the women are the most vulnerable. Our children are vulnerable. The warring parties are our husbands. They are our children. So, we are the mothers and we feel the pinch more than anybody else. But we are lost. I cannot believe that up to this moment, any peace talks that have been attempted even to be organised, and you will not see women there. Even the Grand National dialogue organised, women were not heading any part of it. That is why I am beginning to see that this crisis may take a very long time to end because I know that when women are heard, it will end sooner than later. I thank you all for your very kind attention as I am becoming very emotional.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Esther Omam, Cameroon):** Many thanks my darling sister.

**Florence Mpaayei, Kenya:** Thank you very much. You have really touched our hearts and minds with your articulate presentation.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Salim Musa Omar, Nigeria):** You know it may be easy to start a war but always difficult to control once it begins. This war is rooted in identity issues. But once it started groups are now being manipulated to fight each other. The non state armed groups started accusing the Fulani herdsmen that they were disclosing their hideouts to the military and that is how the trouble between them started.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Thank you very much Gladys for your

presentation. It was very informative. There are number of questions that have been. Asked if you could please respond to them.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Ruhweza, Uganda):** Yes, Lillian I am doing so already.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Thank you.

1. As a child, did you grow up knowing that there were differences between you and French speaking Cameroonians?
2. Have you ever had Cameroonian leader who everybody felt stood for a United Cameroon?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):** Reports show that thousands of women and girls have experienced sexual violence and abuse.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:** Who controls the writing of the history of Cameroon that is taught in schools? Are children taught the true history of Cameroon?

**Esther Omam, Cameroon (responding to Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon):** And they are still experiencing it and now even more with the outbreak of the corona pandemic.

**Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda:**

1. What has been the role of the African Union in solving this conflict?
2. Has there been any intervention by a Western state? How is France involved?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):**

1. The first question is part of the reason for the conflict. We were not taught our history and you may want to know that it is this conflict that has made many Cameroonians to understand the history. I knew as a child that there was French Cameroon and English Cameroon but not the story behind it
2. During the referendum some leaders were for United Cameroon and others were against.



**Florence Mpaayei, Kenya (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):** To add to whether there has been any AU intervention, is any women group working with FEMWISE?

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):**We have not seen them play any important role apart from saying they are advising the parties to talk.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Florence Mpaayei, Kenya):** Not to my knowledge

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):** France is part of the problem. The UK and USA calls on the government to organize an all-inclusive dialogue is not being heeded.

**Florence Mpaayei, Kenya:** Maybe this is something we might want to pick up with Ma Stella and Alice to see what accompaniment FEMWISE can offer to the women consistently.

**Samia El Hashmi, Sudan:** From our experience UNLESS civil society is leading this process will not succeed.... Believe me...

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):** In our schools unfortunately, we are taught European history not Cameroon history. Yesterday I asked one of my nieces who is a university graduate whether she knows what a plebiscite is and she said NO.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Samia El Hashmi, Sudan):** That is why I weep for my country because someone needs to put it the heads of all the civil society actors that they can change this if they keep aside personal interests and work as one.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Florence Mpaayei):** Amen

**Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria:** My last question: Is there any effort by either the

separatists or CSO's/NGO's in addressing the challenges posed by the perception of the pastoralists disclosing the hideouts to Government? I am bringing this in order to nip the challenges before they spiral out of control thereby adding more problems to the agitation.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Florence Mpaayei, Kenya):** Yes Florence. But they are just a handful. A majority do not even care if everyone dies in the NW and SW.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza, Uganda):** A number of CSO are documenting but they are constantly under threat from government. And of course, the government always says they are lying.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Samia El Hashmi, Sudan):** Very few civil society organisations as many fear victimizations by government. Civil society needs even capacity building about their role the way I see it in Cameroon. A majority of them are like minding their business.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Samia El Hashmi, Sudan):** Marginalisation

**Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe (responding to Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon):** You outlined well what I just wanted to ask.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Tamador A. Khalid, Sudan):** That is one of the root causes of the conflict. The UN did not give them that choice of remaining independent. The question that was asked during the referendum was " DO YOU WISH TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE BY JOINING THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON OR BY JOINING THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA"

**Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe:** I stand to be corrected here by you Gladys here. I have heard that as one of the solutions to manage the artificial divide its mandatory for students to learn both English and French and you can't be admitted to tertiary education without passing both languages in order to manage the Anglophone and Francophone identities has it been successful in any way.

**Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon (responding to Ozara):** You are right Ozara French and English which are official languages are compulsory but to be admitted you must not pass both. It depends on what you want to study. You must have passed either of them.

**Ramatu Abarshi, Nigeria (responding to Gladys Mbuya, Cameroon):** Your insight is highly appreciated our dear sister. In this trying period the people of Cameroon are facing, the women more than ever need to be strong emotionally and physically channelling their energy towards togetherness and coexistence of this great bilingual nation. They can achieve this by creating supports groups that aims at standing up for justice and letting their voices be heard. This groups can be formed inter-ethnically or scholarly, women supporting women, to bring an end to the conflict and give peace a chance.

**Patricia Nyaundi:** Did the national dialogue ever happen? How effective have the church been as interlocutors?

**Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria (responding to Ramatu Abarshi), Nigeria:** Exactly, there is much to be achieved by coming together to forge a common goal. Thank you very much for this perspective.

**Patricia Nyaundi:** I saw Samwel Etoo (footballer) the other day and wonder whether Cameroonian luminaries have engaged on this issue? Do they have the ability to mobilise positively on this issue?

**Shama:** Hi all. The session will be wrapping up in the next 10 or so minutes. However, that doesn't mean we cannot continue with this conversation after.

**Jane Anyango, Kenya:** Ohh

**Ramatu Abarshi, Nigeria:** Every life truly matters; the people of Cameroon should use their bilingual advantage as strength and not a reason to cause bloodshed. A life is does not know Anglophone or Francophone, the Government must engineer a policy that implements the fair use of the two languages in official settings. And I hope this

happens as soon as possible to end the conflict.

**Halima Shurie, Kenya:** I am really grateful for this session. I knew nothing about Cameroon before this day. Thank you very much my sister Barrister Gladys I can't thank you enough.

Alice, Shama and team thank you

**Shama, Kenya:** Dear Barrister Gladys, thank you for your time and valuable insights. We have all learnt a lot from the discussion today.

Barrister Lillian, I thank you for moderating today's session. Thanks, Alice, for bringing us together in the planning group and guiding us behind the scenes. Although this session has officially ended, please let's keep this important discussion going!

**Ramatu Abarshi, Nigeria:** One more important aspect they must also consider is how they can compensate the women and children whose lives have been affected by this crisis. Love, Peace and Unity shall reign in Cameroon and Africa at large. We must be patient while this happens. God bless.

**Shama:** As always, please our guidelines;

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism (CVPP)-Africa

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism – Africa is a non-profit network of peace wakers that offers expertise in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach, contributing to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

We set up this group to bring together women leaders working across various thematic social justice areas particularly peace building and women's meaningful participation in decision making roles.

We have enabling guidelines, for the users of our WhatsApp group and website, not rules;

1. The CVPP group was formed as an inclusive space for women safeguarding diverse spaces for dialogue by all generations, transforming and resolving violent conflicts, contributing to human dignity and social justice. Ensure your post is relevant and purposeful.
2. Avoid forwards unless they are relevant to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Avoid cross posting by going through what has been shared to confirm you are not reposting and cross-posting. Links are encouraged. Spamming will pile chats, meaning most will then not follow the discussions.
3. Analyze and give your view or perspective on a subject with respect.
4. We are guided by values and principles as well as our standing as leaders in society and sexist, ethicist, racist, homophobic, political party specific and other demeaning comments or attacks are not allowed. Avoid narrow group views. Stereotypes shall not be entertained on CVPP. Be tolerant and respectful.
5. CVPP is not a place for rumours, innuendo, propaganda, myths or conspiracy theories. Members are asked to share or present what they know to be the truth, facts, evidence or data/information on a subject being discussed.
6. Before posting or replying, always ask yourself this: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it relevant? Is it necessary? Is this a good time to post? Is this going to encourage discussions or degenerate into animosity? Freedom of expression does not relieve you of your obligation to courtesy, decency and decorum.
7. Contribute regularly and share information on what you are doing to promote our stated common objectives. Consider this a conversation. It is not okay for you to just read other people's input without contributing, asking for information, or suggesting improvements.
8. Do not personalize your chats. Always stick to the issue being discussed or ventilated on without attacking or discussing the person who originated or has commented on the subject.

9. Announcement of events your organization or others are doing is encouraged. However, you cannot initiate causes or activities on CCVP without approval from the forum admin before circulation.

10. We may at times, after discussion here on the forum, support a cause we see as key to encouraging members on CVPP or communities that CVPP Members support or are part of. If such causes are acceptable, the admins shall set up a separate group to advance such an activity or cause.

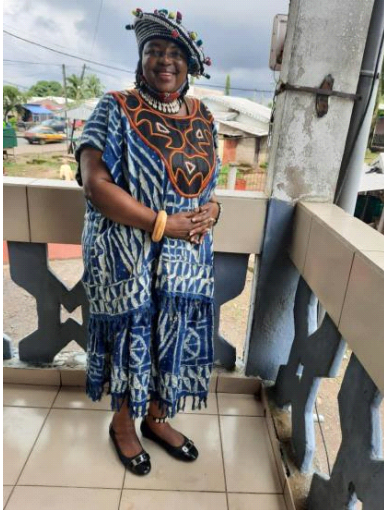
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12. CVPP exists because members make what we do possible through their voluntary work. We wish to thank you most sincerely for being members of this CVPP family.

## **Biographies**

### **1. Barrister Gladys Mbuya**



Gladys Mbuya is a Barrister – At – Law and a Human Rights advocate. She splits her professional time between lawyering and fighting for the promotion and defense of Women rights and the rights of vulnerable persons. She is a public interest lawyer and, in that capacity, had filed a case before the Supreme Court of Cameroon for the law on marriage age to be repealed and brought to standards with international conventions ratified. She is the national president of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Cameroon), a FIDA International Director and Vice secretary of the Cameroon Bar Association.

She holds a Master of Laws degree with specialty in International Human Rights from Georgetown University Law Center in the U.S.A. She is founder and head of Libra Law Office in Tiko Subdivision in Cameroon since June 2006. She has trained many lawyers in her law office. She has drafted constitutions for several women’s human rights groups and lawyers Association. She has represented hundreds of destitute women (pro bono) before the law courts in Cameroon. She is Vice President and resource person of the radio Buea talk and call in show on women’s human rights called “Voices for Women,” which has been on air for over 19 years.

She is a passionate defender of human rights, she defends especially the right to freedom of expression, opinion, assembly, association and peaceful protest.

She is a Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA) Fellow. She is Co-Chairperson of the South West regional task force for following up on trafficking in persons. She is president of the Social Affairs Commission of the Cameroon Bar

Association, a commission with the mission to render legal assistance to minors and other vulnerable persons facing justice. In her capacity as president of the social affairs commission she has organized capacity building workshops for lawyers aimed at enhancing their ability to implement international and national legal instruments on the rights of the child.

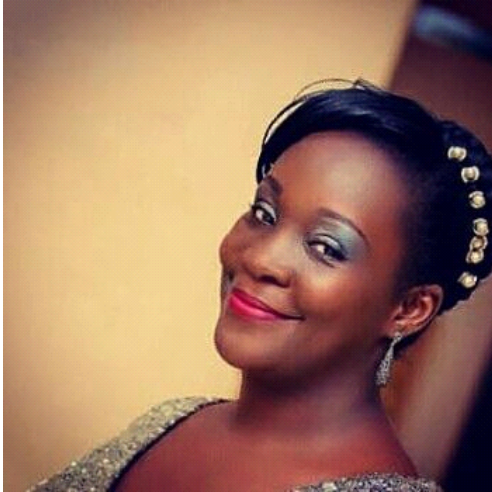
She is the Queen mother of her village. She inherited the throne from her mother of blessed memory who was the immediate past queen mother. As queen mother she is the head of the women's traditional council of the village "TEKUMBENG" while the Fon is the head of the male traditional council "NGUMBA" as a feminist she now uses her position to influence positive change and eradication of repugnant customs.

She has acted as a resource person in numerous human rights training programs. She has coordinated and organized a series of Inter-Community Dialogues in Cameroon as a means of contributing to the return of peace in Cameroon. She is the legal adviser to several civil society groups and has received various commendations for her work in promoting and defending women's human rights and the human rights of all.

Since Mbuyah has received three awards, from FIDA Africa for advancing women's rights, from REDHAC for defending human rights and from the High Commission of Canada to Cameroon for advancing human rights.

## **2. Advocate Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza**





Lillian Kobusingye Ruhweza is a Senior program officer with the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA Uganda). She is passionate about transitional justice, women and children's rights and promoting access to justice for women and children's rights violations.

At FIDA Uganda, Lillian manages projects on access to justice, social economic rights, human rights and transitional justice that have brought positive impact to the communities the projects are implemented in.

Lillian received her LLB from the University of Wales in the United Kingdom and has worked at FIDA Uganda since 2012.

