

A photograph of several children in a rural setting, filling yellow plastic jerrycans from a muddy stream. The children are bent over, dipping the containers into the water. The background shows tall grass and a person standing further away. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

SANITATION OUTREACH AND ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT

PREPARED BY

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Cover Photo Credit: <https://waterjournalistsafrika.com/2014/10/cameroon-bamenda-city-grapples-with-poor-sanitation/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The nation of Cameroon was formed via a merger of two distinct colonial territories, one administered by the British and the other by the French. The two territories initially joined together in 1961 as a federation called the Federal Republic of Cameroon, but in 1972 the federation was abolished in favour of a unitary state, the United Republic of Cameroon, now known simply as the Republic of Cameroon. President Paul Biya took power in 1982 after the resignation of his predecessor, and the now 85-year-old Biya has ruled ever since. Currently, Anglophones only represent 20% of Cameroon's population, and over time the nation has developed into a predominantly Francophone oriented state, leaving Anglophones feeling alienated. Discontent has flared over issues like a lack of job opportunities and discrimination against Anglophones, perceived central government meddling with English schools and courts in Anglophone regions, and harsh crackdowns against Anglophone protestors.¹ In 2017, these tensions turned violent as Anglophone rebel militias emerged, declared independence from the central Cameroonian government, and began launching attacks on soldiers and strategic targets.²

We recommend investing \$20 million in a track II initiative that allows the central government of Cameroon to address the grievances of the anglophone general population and illustrate goodwill that will carry the country to a continued unified nation living in peace with equality to all its citizens. The proposed “Sanitation Outreach and Accessibility Project” [SOAP] is a Global Affairs Canada initiative, that will address the deteriorating human development indicator that has been attributed to the increase in frustration and violence amongst the anglophone speaking Cameroonians. Access to water and sanitation is relatively low in Cameroon and even more so in rural areas. Given that the West region of Cameroon (English speaking part of the country) has fewer urban centers, we induce that this part of the country has lower access to water and sanitation than the more urban and developed francophone region. SOAP will increase water and sanitation to less developed regions in the West of Cameroon and will be constructed in collaboration with the central government, local anglophone firms and workers, and local NGOs. The objective of this track II initiative is to alleviate tension by improving human development, allow the central government to demonstrate goodwill to its anglophone citizens, and pave the way for a peaceful solution and the continuation of a unified Cameroon.³

BACKGROUND

Diarrheal diseases are the third leading cause of disease and death in children younger than 5 years of age in Africa and were responsible for an estimated 330,000 deaths in 2015.⁴ For many years, cholera has been a common occurrence in Cameroon, with recurring outbreaks. Between 2004-2013, epidemiological surveillance reported 46,172 cases with 1,817 fatalities with an overall yearly trend indicating an increase of cases and fatalities over time.⁵ The Far North Region has specifically been more impacted by cholera than other regions, leading to investigations on the relationship between water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) parameters, and health outcomes using health surveys and molecular analysis. Research findings suggest that water contamination may play an important role in contributing to gastrointestinal illness, supporting the need for public health intervention in the area.⁶

OBJECTIVES

The Project

The Sanitation Outreach and Accessibility Project (SOAP) is a six-year pilot project aimed at alleviating complications of poor sanitation while building infrastructure and capacity for bridging linguistic tensions through joint cooperation and dialogue. Lack of public service access in Anglophone regions, especially for water and sanitation, is symptomatic of the widespread discrimination experienced by the minority, instigating conflict within the region.⁷ Developing sanitation infrastructure will be an effective strategy in reducing linguistic tensions, increasing access to public services, and setting up sustainable relationships with finance organizations in urban Anglophone regions of the country.

Key objectives include:

- ⇒ Increasing access to sanitation services
- ⇒ Addressing grievances between the Anglophone population and the Cameroonian government
- ⇒ Ensuring Anglophone and Francophone populations work together in terms of public institutional capacity
- ⇒ Increasing economic development and investments in Anglophone regions
- ⇒ Ensuring that women are not disenfranchised or ignored by involving them in the design, rollout, and maintenance of the project

Stakeholders and Partners

The primary stakeholders are those connected to the project: local communities, businesses, the government of Cameroon, and civil society organizations. Local communities, businesses, and the government of Cameroon are also the immediate beneficiaries. The government of Cameroon will receive increased public institutional capacities in Anglophone regions, which will reduce tensions. Investments will be targeted locally to build and develop sanitation infrastructure in the region, with local communities supplying the workforce for construction and maintenance. MEGA Group Co. Ltd, an Anglophone engineering firm located in Bamenda, will spearhead construction in collaboration with WaterCan and their technological innovations surrounding water development. Since women culturally maintain an important role around water and sanitation in Cameroon, CARE's local offices will also be brought on for their expertise with African water development projects that ensure cultural gender dynamics that empower women are not harmed in the process.⁸ Canada is also a stakeholder; as this project is in line with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy in promoting peace, inclusiveness and prosperity in Cameroon. Additionally, GardaWorld, a Canadian security firm, will be hired to deploy security personnel for the project.

The main partners involved will be:

- The Government of Cameroon
- Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
- CARE
- WaterCan
- MEGA Group Co. Ltd.
- GardaWorld

PRE-PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT

Pre-Conditions

The current conflict in Cameroon poses a high risk for any development projects being implemented in the Northwest and Southwest regions. Violent government crackdowns; lack of access to public services and trust in government; high unemployment; a youth bulge; and systemic discrimination against the Anglophone minority are all identified as posing the highest risk to increased violence in these regions.⁹ Despite the risk, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy outlines its commitment to focusing its work in the world's most fragile countries, as Cameroon is consistently ranked as one of the most fragile countries in the world.¹⁰ The following sections will outline the location, timing, political context, and opportunities for SOAP's implementation, and highlight the potential impacts it will have on the region.

Location:

The Anglophone Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon are currently a battleground between government and Ambazonian forces.¹¹ These rural locations were chosen as they hold the largest Anglophone populations in Cameroon. Lack of access to public services, specifically water and sanitation, continues to fuel conflict between both groups. Current estimates suggest that only 23% of people in the Southwest and 12% Northwestern regions have access to basic forms of sanitation, significantly less than the 42% national average for rural populations in Cameroon.¹² This project understands that addressing sanitation issues in both regions can also positively impact the lives of many Anglophones and potentially de-escalate conflict in the region.

Timing:

The project is expected to begin implementation following its approval in mid-2019. Violence is currently escalating in the region.¹³ It is thus imperative that measures be taken to relieve tensions before the conflict reaches its climax.

Political Context:

Risk of ethnic rebellion remains high. Persistent grievances with the Francophone community, and pressure by Ambazonian fighters, fuels linguistic divisions in the country.¹⁴ Recent initiatives proposed by Paul Biya failed to satisfy the Ambazonian leadership and Anglophone population.¹⁵ Without effective interventions, both sides will continue to diverge, and an increase in violence should be anticipated.

Opportunities:

The past Water Supply and Sanitation Project (WSP) provides us an excellent access-point by providing organizational capacities that fulfill the gap they've failed to complete in rural sanitation.¹⁶ Doing so also allows us to leverage current access-points established by them with local communities and the government of Cameroon. The government of Cameroon is currently drawing up new strategies for the second phase of their Vision 2035 policy plan, focusing on political and economic inclusiveness, which provides an additional access-point for the project.¹⁷

Possible Impacts

As per previously conducted Conflict Diagnostic for Cameroon, human development has been flagged as high risk and deteriorating indicator. SOAP has been constructed to focus on human development and alleviate tension by increasing water accessibility and sanitation to anglophone rural areas. This will be done in an inclusive participatory manner; including the government of Cameroon, local NGO, and a local anglophone engineering firm. The overarching objective is to not only offer increased water and sanitation to previously neglected areas in the anglophone region, but to establish a sign of goodwill from the central government of Cameroon to its anglophone citizens and allow for cooperation between both grieving parties.

Immediate Impact:

Increasing Livelihood	SOAP will increase access to water and sanitation which can ultimately increase livelihoods of communities due to increased health, hygiene, and agriculture and farming; a crucial industry in rural anglophones areas of Cameroon. ¹⁸
Improving Human Development	Human development has been flagged as a high risk and declining conflict risk diagnostic indicator and is used as the basis for this initiative. SOAP will work towards increasing the current 43.3% access to water and 18.9% access to sanitation in rural areas in Cameroon. ¹⁹ Poor access to public services was a cause of tension and protests from the anglophone citizens. Effectiveness of public services in Cameroon has been highlighted as showing “warning signs” by the Mo Ibrahim foundation. ²⁰ SOAP will work to immediately increase access to water and sanitation in targeted areas and will aim to work with the government to increase access to public and essential services in the future.
Reduced Tensions	Reduced frustration from anglophones benefiting from SOAP as a result of increased investment in basic needs and infrastructure. It is also anticipated that the news of SOAP will travel through word of mouth, increasing the sense of hope amongst anglophone populations in other areas that the central government is taking efforts to increase their livelihoods and invest in their wellbeing.
Possible Negative Externality	The collaboration of anglophone citizens and firms with the central government, might prompt resistance and potential violence from Ambazonian separatists, potentially targeting both anglophone collaborators and government officials. Ambazonia supporters may view this collaboration as unfavourable and a threat to their separatist movement.
Contingencies	SOAP has allocated a budget to maintain security using a third party, as a result of the above possible negative externality and possible continuation of existent violence.

Long-term Impact:

Increased Public Spending	Convince the government of Cameroon on how increased public spending in anglophone regions can alleviate tension. SOAP will reach out to Mo Ibrahim Foundation to monitor improvement in public services effectiveness and its impact on stability; persuading the Cameroonian government on the importance of such initiatives.
Reducing National Divide	Based on the possible future increase in government spending in anglophone regions, this impact is twofold: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) reducing frustration of anglophones over disparity in access to public services and their ultimate resentment towards the francophones as a result.2) SOAP and further initiatives are co-sponsored by the central government and collaborated with anglophone firms and citizens, allowing for mutual understanding and continued unity.
Empowering Women	Women will play a key role in easing tension. SOAP will be an inclusive initiative and ensures employing women in the construction and management of this project. Empowering women and including them in the process, will allow them to benefit from increased social status and as a result become advocates for peaceful dialogue and continued unity. The involvement of women in SOAP will also act to include women in future peace initiatives to ensure their voice is heard and their specific concerns as women in conflict are addressed; tackling gender-based violence and hardship are necessary for any sustainable peaceful outcome in the future. ²¹
Peace Agreements	The increase in human development and government initiatives in anglophone regions will alleviate frustration and assist in collaboration between two parties. Increasing the chance for rational and peaceful dialogue and in working towards a continued unified Cameroon with equality to all citizens. ²²

OPERATIONAL DECISIONS AND MONITORING

Target Areas

Before any consultations, research will be conducted to determine which regions of Cameroon are the furthest behind in terms of their sanitation infrastructure and access to sanitation services. This will be used to select three regions for the initial funding that will collect data to determine their impact based on results that will be monitored and evaluated. Factors in selecting regions will include incidences of gastrointestinal illnesses, ensuring equity in linguistic representation, and finding areas in greater need of collaborative networks among other factors. The final goal of these evaluations will be to aid the Government in establishing a water supply and sanitation sector strategy (WSS) in collaboration with both Anglo and Franco regions with all levels of government to create a sustainable network for continued collaboration including from external benefactors. This project will aid in the sanitation component of this strategy, leveraging the work from the WSP project for the water supply.

Consultations

Broad-based consultations will be conducted at the national level with lead government agencies, local and country sector stakeholders, donor institutions, and members of civil society to develop specific priority actions, and to set up an operational strategy and an oversight committee.

Organizational Coordination

The oversight committee will oversee operations and will be consisting of affected stakeholders including Anglo and Franco government representatives at national and subnational levels, women's organizations to ensure equal representation, and other relevant stakeholders. This will build on the consultations and collaborative structures of the recent WSP program where the World Bank has concluded that access to improved sanitation sources in Cameroon have not been enough to offset the rapid population growth resulting in a sector that continues to be overlooked.²³

Project Implementation

The project would be implemented in two phases over 6 years. During the first three years, three Governorates would be selected based on the priorities and methodologies described above to assess those most in need of infrastructure, sociological and geological variety, as well as government branches most in need of strengthening. The results from the operations above would be monitored and evaluated, and the lessons would form the basis for the WSS strategy.

During the second phase, the project may expand to other priority areas determined during the project preparation above and serve to strengthen existing networks and build on intergovernmental, local, and transnational partnerships.

The project will be implemented by the oversight committee of relevant stakeholders mentioned above headed by GAC, and will be based on two major principles:

- 1) **Community management:** Worldwide experience shows that rural water and sanitation system schemes (RWSS) work best if implemented through a local or regional institution.²⁴ Participation and ownership communities would assume responsibility for managing their water systems. It is important that local communities are capable of owning their assets as legal entities, capable of borrowing money, and leveraging training and administrative support of their systems. This will build on the relationship between Anglo and Franco regions ensuring the beginning of mutual 'trust' and collaborative partnerships.
- 2) **Build on local demand:** Implementing projects without consultations and continued involvement of beneficiaries would result in previously noted breakdowns, lack of operation and maintenance, and eventual loss of capital resources seen in other RWSS projects.²⁵ Communities would be at the forefront of this project to ensure they come forward and there is a willingness to participate. The oversight committee would insure social mobilization teams that work with locals to choose appropriate technologies and services dependent on needs and will also look to incorporate key health messages to support water handling and safe sanitation.

Environmental Aspects

A fundamental goal of this project will be to build on rural public health and have a positive impact on the environment. Cases of cholera and other epidemics illustrate a need to ensure safe handling of waste management systems, disposal facilities, and health and wellness education to aim to reduce the spread of water-borne diseases. It will look to tackle any exploitation of groundwater through community-managed systems.

Operational Limitations

The limitations associated with this project will consider the current ongoing violence in Cameroon that poses a risk to those involved. Certain steps will be taken to mitigate these risks including the selection process of target areas, and partnerships with security personnel both nationally and internationally. Additionally, weak collaboration between Anglo and Franco regions and different levels of government contribute to the limitations that will be addressed through the methodologies above, namely through the structuring of the relevant committees and inclusion of all relevant stakeholders through a participatory approach to ensure program success.

Operational Timeframe and Budget

Total Budget; US\$ 20, 000, 000

Consultation and Stakeholder Selection Phase *(5 months)*

15% of Budget

- Establishment of three target areas
- Outreach to stakeholders including local campaigns
- Relevant training of local contributors
- Establishment of an oversight committee and social mobilization teams by region
- Determining necessary security

Phase 1: First Three Target Areas Most in Need *(2 years 7 months)*

35% of Budget

- Overseeing implementation of sanitation services
- Linking all relevant stakeholder through the appropriate channels
- Continued training on demand
- Continued outreach to local stakeholders
- Employing necessary security

Phase 2: Reporting Phase *(6 years to be completed from beginning to end of all phases)*

10% of Budget

- Cumulative evaluation and monitoring of impact and effectiveness
- Progress towards whole-of-government WSS strategy
- Exploration of Phase 2 of project
- Examination of future expansion and broadening into further target areas
- GAC creates a database and works with stakeholders to collect information

Phase 2: Second Three Target Areas *(3 Years)*

35% of Budget

- Overseeing implementation of sanitation services
- Linking all relevant stakeholder through the appropriate channels
- Continued training on demand
- Continued outreach to local stakeholders
- Employing necessary security

Finalizing Reports on Impact *(1-year post-project)*

5% of Budget

- Cumulative evaluation and monitoring of impact and effectiveness
- Progress towards whole-of-government WSS strategy
- Examination of future expansion and broadening into further target areas
- GAC publishes a final bilingual report and shares with partners

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

GAC will take on the responsibility of managing and analyzing data from the program to conduct an evaluation. GAC will work alongside local stakeholders and partners for program monitoring and data collection, which they will store in a database for tracking. GAC will draft reports based on the information collected surrounding the progress of the project and budgetary spending for both planned and non-planned expenses. GAC will also be interested in the qualitative data on French and English cooperation during the project for their reports. The data and reports will be essential for justifying further expansion of SOAP to aid other regions of Cameroon.

Following the program, GAC will lead an evaluation of the project in partnership with the Cameroon Government and local NGOs. A final report will be published in both English and French and shared with partners and stakeholders.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

1. To assess the project's ability to improve access to clean water in the project zone;
2. To assess the project's ability to improve cooperation between French and English groups;
3. To examine the unintended impacts of the project; and,
4. To establish best practices for future projects.

In addition to reporting on the efficacy of program to improve access to clean water, the report should also specifically examine what effect the joint construction process and ownership of the water and sanitation systems had on the French and English groups' ability to cooperate. It is also beneficial to examine the unanticipated impacts of the projects, such as how it impacted women and if any new tensions arose by discussing the project with the local community. This will lead to a better understanding of the impacts of this program and allow GAC to draft effective best practices.

Sustainability

After the water and sanitation systems are completed, access to clean water should continue as the local contractors will be knowledgeable in its functions and maintenance requirements. Additionally, cooperation between the English and French groups is well positioned to continue after the end of the project because of their shared ownership and interest in maintaining the function of these systems. Although this is a very focused project and it is beyond its scope to resolve the wider tensions between the linguistic groups, it will help establish a framework and avenue for future cooperation, while improving the quality of life in Cameroon.

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