

**REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON  
PEACE – WORK - FATHERLAND**

-----  
**MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
AND THE FAMILY**  
-----

**REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN  
PAIX – TRAVAIL - PATRIE**

-----  
**MINISTERE DE LA PROMOTION DE  
LA FEMME ET DE LA FAMILLE**  
-----



**POLITICAL EDUCATION  
MANUAL FOR WOMEN IN  
CAMEROON**



Planet 50-50 by 2030  
Step It Up for Gender Equality

**December 2018, Revised Edition**

## Content

<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, POLITICAL SITUATION IN CAMEROON AND DEFINITION OF SOME COMMON CONCEPTS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>I. OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN CAMEROON .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I.1. Institutional situation .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I.2. Administrative situation .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>I.3. Political situation .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>II. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>CHAPTER II: ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR DUTIES.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>The President of the Republic.....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Members of Parliament.....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Senators .....</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Regional Councillors .....</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Mayors.....</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Municipal Councillors .....</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>CHAPTER III: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS .....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>STAGES OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>I. PRE-ELECTION OPERATIONS.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>I.1. Enrolment of voters.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>I.2. Drawing up voter registers.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>I.3. Issuance and distribution of voter cards.....</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>I.4. Convening of the electorate and fixing of the polling date .....</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>I.5. Nomination of candidates.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>I.6. Electoral campaigns.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>II. ELECTION OPERATIONS.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>II.1. Opening and closing of polling stations.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>II.2. Monitoring and checking of polling operations.....</b>	<b>406</b>
<b>II.3. Counting of votes, publication of local tallies and handing over / forwarding of election reports.....</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>II.4. Stakeholders of the electoral process.....</b>	<b>429</b>
<b>A. Key actors .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.9</b>
<b>B. Other Stakeholders .....</b>	<b>50</b>

<b>CHAPTER IV: MANAGEMENT OF ELECTORAL DISPUTES .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>I. PRE-ELECTION PERIOD .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>II. ELECTION PERIOD .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>III. POST ELECTION PERIOD.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>CHAPTER V: REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN50 POLITICAL LIFE50...57</b>	
<b>I. ENROLLING ON A VOTER REGISTER.....</b>	<b>519</b>
<b>II. JOINING A POLITICAL PARTY .....</b>	<b>519</b>
<b>III. CREATING A POLITICAL PARTY .....</b>	<b>519</b>
<b>IV. CANDIDACY REQUIREMENTS TO THE VARIOUS ELECTIONS .....</b>	<b>61</b>
For the Municipal Elections.....	61
For Regional Elections .....	62
For Legislative Elections .....	62
For Senatorial Elections .....	62
For the Presidential Election.....	63
<b>V. DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FROM CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIVE POSITIONS.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>CHAPTER VI: STRATEGIES TO BOOST AND OPTIMIZE52 FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LIFE.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>I. HISTORICAL BENCHMARKS IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF WOMEN .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>II. SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>III. STRATEGIES TO DISTINGUISH CAMEROONIAN POLITICAL WOMEN .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>77</b>

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

Sec	:	Section
CAB	:	Cabinet
CC	:	Constitutional Council
NCSMC	:	National Council for the Suspension of Media Coverage on Electoral Campaigns
NCC	:	National Communication Council
CRTV	:	Cameroon Radio and Television
SSC	:	Supreme State Council
ELECAM:		Elections Cameroon
NEO	:	National Elections Observatory
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
OWCNU	:	Organization of the Women of the Cameroon National Union
CSO	:	Civil Society Organization
MINCOM:		Ministry of Communication
MINAT	:	Ministry of Territorial Administration
MINDEF	:	Ministry of Defence
MINFI	:	Ministry of Finance
MINREX:		Ministry of External Relations
MINSANTE:		Ministry of Public Health
AU	:	African Union
NCCW	:	National Council of Cameroonian Women
DUCW	:	Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women
CU	:	Cameroonian Union
CNU	:	Cameroon National Union

## **PREFACE**

The Head of State, His Excellency, Paul BIYA has on several occasions, expressed his determination to enable urban and rural women to fully enjoy their civic rights and participate in political life. In a bid to implement this political will, the Cameroon government endeavours to build the capacities of this target group in compliance with the priorities and choices of the international community.

In this wise, a training manual was designed in 2012 to serve the purpose. Three years later, the socio-political context changed under the joint effects of electoral forecast and evolution of the legal framework governing the electoral process as well as the coming into play of new political institutions on the one hand and new political parties on the other hand.

Consequently, there was need to review the form and contents of the existing text so as to adapt it to these changes in order to enable the women to be updated with the new exigencies of the political game in an ever-changing world.

The publication of this training manual is a logical consequence of this dynamic move.

At the time that our country is moving towards a period of elections and democratic consolidation, our utmost wish is that this manual be used as a bedside book by women who are either committed in politics or intend to do so now or in a distant future.

**Madam ABENA ONDOA née OBAMA Marie Thérèse**

**Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family**

## INTRODUCTION

Strengthening women's political power is an integral part of the promotion of human rights and one of the requirements to fulfil the international commitments taken by Cameroon in relation to Sustainable Development; One of the major impediments in this area is the lack of political training/ education and information for women.

This manual is intended to fill the above-mentioned deficiency; The information contained therein is grouped under six major topics corresponding to 06 (six) chapters entitled as follows:

- Overview of the institutional, administrative and political situation in Cameroon;
- Elected representatives and their duties;
- The electoral process;
- Settlement of electoral disputes;
- Requirements for participation in political life;
- Strategies to boost and maximize participation in political life.

The manual is based on the national policy guidelines for promoting the rights of women, and chiefly on legislative and regulatory texts governing political life and electoral processes in Cameroon.

This document is drafted in fulfilment of a research methodology involving the collection and analysis of documents, consultation of resource persons, holding of information consolidation sessions, organisation of a drafting and validation workshop grouping staff drawn from the following ministries: Women's Empowerment and the Family, Territorial Administration, Justice and other institutions or bodies such as Parliament, local councillors, ELECAM, development partners and Civil Society Organizations.

**CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL,  
ADMINISTRATIVE, POLITICAL SITUATION  
IN CAMEROON AND DEFINITION OF  
SOME COMMON CONCEPTS**



In Cameroon, politics is played within an institutional, administrative and political context whereby, most women have a rough idea of what it is all about;

Similarly, political jargon and practice make use of terminologies whose meaning and understanding are usually far from obvious for everybody. Apart from women, fortunate to have obtained sound education, those from villages or of low educational level may come across such terminologies without understanding a shred.

Chapter I of this manual provides some basic information on the socio-political situation of our country; It also sheds light on some of the frequently used jargon that shall be explained subsequently in the manual; Knowing the institutions of the country will enable women who intend to do politics to strengthen their citizenship and multiply their chances of succeeding.

## **I. OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN CAMEROON**

### **I.1. INSTITUTIONAL SITUATION**

Independent since the 1st of January 1960, Cameroon has evolved from a federal State, proclaimed on the 1st of October 1961 with two federated administrations and one federal administration, to a unitary State, instituted by the Constitution of 2 June 1972. The constitutional amendment of 18 January 1996 enshrined a decentralised Unitary State under the appellation Republic of Cameroon, adopted since 4 February 1984.

This Constitution entrenches the separation of executive, legislative and judiciary powers.

The Executive Arm of government is held by the President of the Republic, Head of State, who is guarantor of national independence and territorial integrity. As Head of the Executive Arm, he/she defines policies for the Nation. He/she is elected for a seven-year (07) term of office through direct, equal and secret universal suffrage. He/she is re-eligible, in keeping with Article 6 (2) new of the Constitution.

The Legislative Arm is exercised by a Parliament comprising two houses: the Lower House or National Assembly, made up of 180 members, elected through direct and secret universal suffrage, for a five- year (05) renewable term

of office, and the Upper House or the Senate, which has 100 seats, representing 10 members per Region, three (03) of whom are appointed by the President of the Republic and the other seven (07) elected through indirect suffrage by a regional electoral college.

Judiciary power is wielded by the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and other Courts.

With regard to the institutions, the Regional Councils and Audit Benches are still to be put in place.

This institutional development has to be completed with the putting in place of Regional Councils and Audit Tribunals.

National political life has witnessed a profound transformation following the restoration of multiparty democracy in December 1990. This institutional development came with by an evolution in the administrative organisation.

## **I.2. ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION**

The State of Cameroon is made up of 10 Regions, 58 Divisions, and 360 Sub-Divisions, placed under the authority of Governors, Senior Divisional Officers and Sub-Divisional Officers respectively.

Law No.96/06 of 18 January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2 June 1972 enshrines decentralisation as a fundamental mechanism for promoting the advancement of democracy and good governance at local level. Moreover, Law No.2004/017 of 22 July 2004 defines general guidelines for the said decentralisation. In this regard, two other specific laws setting out rules applicable to councils, on the one hand and to regions on the other hand, were respectively voted. These two laws, supplemented by a good number of regulatory texts, facilitate the transfer of specific powers and resources to local councils by the State; this is intended to foster development with regard to social economy, health, education, culture and sports.

## **I.3. POLITICAL SITUATION**

The political landscape has been considerably enriched since 1990, thanks to the advent of the multiparty system and pluralistic democracy, governed by Law No.90/056 of 19 December 1990 relating to political parties. By virtue of this Law, all Cameroonians who enjoy their civic rights, may create a political party or join any party of their choice. This multiparty option implicitly

entrenches electoral competition. In fact, the ever-increasing number of political parties has now exceeded three hundred (300).

From 1992 to date, fifteen (15) multiparty elections have been organised in Cameroon, namely:

- 04 presidential elections (1992, 1997, 2004 and 2011);
- 05 legislative elections (1992, 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2013);
- 02 senatorial elections (2013 and 2018);
- 04 municipal elections (1996, 2002, 2007 and 2013).

The political context is governed by legislative and regulatory texts including the Electoral Code, introduced under Law No.2012/001 of 19 April 2012, amended and supplemented by Law No.2012/017 of 21 December 2012. The presidential election and referendums are also open to Cameroonians resident abroad. This provision is governed by Law No.2011/013 of 13 July 2011 relating to voting by Cameroonians settled or resident abroad, and the corresponding Implementation Decree No.2011/237 of 8 August 2011.

It is worth noting that in Cameroon; past elections were conducted by the following bodies: the Ministry of Territorial Administration, National Observatory of Elections " (ONEL) and by Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) since 2009. This is an independent body in charge of organising, running and supervising all the electoral process and referendums.

## II. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

**Abrogation of mandate:** A special measure that consists in cutting short the holding of an elective position or the exercise of a mandate with regard to the normal duration.

**Abstention:** This is the act whereby an elector or part of the electorate opts not to take part in voting, even though they meet all the legal requirements to do so.

**Absolute majority:** A case where a candidate or a list of candidates must have obtained more than half of the votes cast. This means more than 50% of electors must have chosen this candidate or list. In which case, victory is awarded to the candidate or list that obtained more than 50% of the votes;

**Biometric recompilation of electoral registers:** An option taken by Government to ensure higher transparency in the electoral process in

Cameroon. It consists in introducing biometric elements (fingerprints, photo) during the recompilation of the voter register.

**Ballot box:** A transparent or translucent box bearing a seal, equipped with a slit, designed to receive envelopes. Containing ballot papers

**Ballots validly cast:** Valid ballots slotted into the ballot boxes in an election, excluding blank ballots and void ballots.

**Blank ballot:** This refers to any envelope discarded inside the polling booth by an elector and which does not contain any ballot paper or contains the ballot papers of several candidates or lists in competition. Also obtains as void any ballot paper slotted in the ballot box without an envelope. The blank ballot therefore means that the elector has not chosen any of the candidates, or any of the lists in competition.

**Candidate for an election:** Any citizen (male or female) who satisfies the legal eligibility requirements to run in a local election (municipal or regional election) or a national election (presidential or parliamentary election).

**Compilation of lists of candidatures:** The act for a female or male candidate to submit the names of running mates in compliance with the electoral regulation on gender consideration.

**Convening of the electorate:** An act of the Head of State specifying the nature of an election and fixing the date (year, month, day and time span) for the said election.

**Co-opting:** The discretionary inclusion of a person on a list, or among members of a party, or in a mission or political activity.

**Decentralisation:** A process (phase) that consists in the transfer by the State to Decentralised Local Councils (regions, councils) of specific powers and suitable resources, in view of promoting development, democracy and governance at local level;

**Democracy:** A system based on freedom and equality (no discrimination with regard to birth, gender, race, religion, wealth, etc...) of each and every one before the law. A democratic society is characterised by respect of Human Rights, public, individual and collective freedoms. This refers to government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is opposed to totalitarianism or dictatorship where power emanates not from the people, but from an

individual or an absolute governing authority depending on their will as imposed on an oppressed people.

**Devolvement:** A mode of organisation of administration whereby certain powers are delegated or transferred by a central administration to services spread out on the territory, termed services or devolved services.

**Direct universal suffrage:** This is a voting system whereby all electors can cast their votes in favour of a candidate or a list of candidates without any intermediary.

**Disposal bag:** A dustbin placed in the polling booth in which ballot papers not chosen by the elector are discarded.

**Elected representative:** Any person chosen in a vote or an election to speak or act on behalf of the people.

**Election:** The choice, selection, designation by means of vote or election of an individual or group of individuals who will speak or act in the name of the electors. In politics, election is the most democratic mode of acceding to power.

**Election campaign:** A legal period during which female and male candidates for an election carry out propaganda about their political manifesto, their ideas in view of canvassing for the votes of electors.

**Elector:** Any person who participates in choosing people that will speak or act on their behalf or on behalf of their community. Such a person must be enrolled on a voter register, which is a document on which the names and pictures (biometric) of all those who are authorised to vote are entered.

**Electoral Code:** An arsenal of general and specific legal and regulatory instruments governing elections and referendums in a country.

**Electoral constituency:** An entire or part of an administrative unit (division or council) where electors duly registered must cast their votes. In Cameroon, with regard to the presidential election, the entire national territory constitutes one electoral constituency; In this vein, voters who are duly enrolled abroad vote at Cameroon Embassies or High Commissions; Nonetheless, by decree the President of the Republic may modify the electoral constituencies through a special administrative mapping;

**Electoral dispute:** All complaints or claims that may be lodged before, during and after the electorate has been convened right up to the declaration or release of results.

**Electoral disqualification:** Ineligibility to take part in an election as an elector or candidate. This applies to whoever has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment, is held in custody, is of un-discharged bankruptcy, is of unsound mind or is the subject of a warrant of arrest.

**Electoral process:** A series of mechanisms, provisions or measures that contribute in the organisation, management and supervision of an election.

**Electoral qualification:** Quality or capacity of any person who meets all the legal requirements to be an elector or candidate. These requirements involve nationality, age, absence of disqualification.

**Electoral registers:** An official document in which the name, date and place of birth, names of parents, occupation of electors or duly registered voters are entered within a given electoral constituency.

**Electorate:** All persons (men, women, physically-challenged persons, elderly persons and youths) duly enrolled on voter registers and who, by so doing, are authorized to participate in elections within a country.

**Federalism:** A political system whereby a federal State shares powers with member states (federated states), that are sovereign within their own territory;

**Independent candidature:** This is a specificity pertaining to the presidential election in Cameroon; The principle of an independent candidature offers to any citizen who does not belong to a political party, to stand for the presidential election on condition that they submit a list of 300 signatures (legible) of dignitaries holding elective positions or exercising the duties of a 1st-class traditional ruler, 30 per region, in addition to the other legal requirements applicable to all candidates in such election.

**Independent observer:** Any person (male or female), authorised to monitor the conduct of electoral operations, without interfering in such operations and without any partiality.

**International observer:** Any person designated by an international organisation and accredited by MINAT following the consent of MINREX, to monitor the conduct of electoral operations.

**Indirect universal suffrage:** This is a voting system whereby an electoral college casts their votes in favour of a candidate or a list of candidates on behalf of the electorate;

**Joint electoral commission:** All the persons (men, women, physically-challenged persons, elderly persons and youths), designated by the administration, political parties and civil society to conduct electoral operations.

**Mandate (Term of office):** The legal duration during which an elected position is held.

**Manifesto:** A vision of what a candidate hopes to achieve for the society once elected. This propounds general ideas in the form of an alternative policy programme as opposed to the existing model.

**Mayor:** The head of a council executive.

**Majority:** The case of any candidate or group of candidates who have obtained the greatest number of votes following vote counting. There are two types of majority: absolute majority and simple majority.

**Municipal Council:** The body that deliberates within a council.

**Municipal Councillor:** The locally-elected representative, member of the municipal council.

**National observer:** Any volunteer, accredited by MINAT, to monitor the conduct of electoral operations.

**Nomination paper:** A written act by which any citizen who meets the eligibility requirements states their intention to run as candidate in an election. It is addressed to the body in charge of electoral operations, no later than 10 days after the electorate has been convened to the polls. Upon submission of the nomination paper, a provisional nomination paper receipt is issued. Apart from the presidential election, every candidate must be endorsed by a political party.

**Oath:** A form of pledge provided by Law and pronounced solemnly by some elected representatives before assuming duty (President of the Republic, President of the Regional Council, Mayor).

**Plebiscite:** This is a situation where a candidate or a list of candidates is voted or chosen by all electors or simply proclaimed unanimously adopted.

**Political base:** A set of structures of a political party within an administrative unit, and all legalised political parties within a given constituency. The election management body takes into account the voter register and the territorial distribution of constituencies when defining the political district.

**Political party:** This is a structured organisation of men, women, physically-challenged persons, elderly persons and youths, grouped under a legalised association, having as objective to canvass for popular support through votes with a view to conquer, exercise or remain in power. Members of the same political party share similar ideas, similar manifesto and similar vision for the future.

**Political rally:** A public gathering organised by a political party, after obtaining a public manifestation declaration receipt from the competent administrative authority, to spread one or several messages connected to its life or its objectives at a given moment.

**Politics:** A set of ideas and means put in place, not only to govern men and women, but equally to assure their physical, moral, material and environmental wellbeing. Politics cannot obtain without the participation of all. That is why the youth, the elderly, men and women must take part in politics.

Politics is derived from the Greek word ‘polis’ which means the city. Whereas, according to the Greek meaning of the term, the city refers to a space where life is good for everybody and a place where free citizens live.

Thus, politics is the art of conquering, influencing or exercising power for the purpose of ensuring the wellbeing of everybody in the society.

Some critics assimilate politics to craftiness, crime, treachery, a game of hide and seek, disguise of people’s real intentions and convictions. The same critics believe that politics is a dangerous game, fraught with cruelty, betrayal, murder, deep-rooted grudge and score-settling.

Those are mere views rather than reality. Consequently, women must not be apprehensive of politics in the face of such allegations. Practising politics, means contributing to the wellbeing of the country in which we live.

**Poll:** A series of operations essential to a vote or an election. There are several types of elections:

- **Single-round election:** Ballots are cast once. Example, election of the President of the Republic.

- **Two-round election:** After the first round, the two leading candidates go in for another round. Electors are then invited to elect one of the two candidates who obtained the best results in the first round.
- **List system:** Here, the elector is expected to choose a list comprising at least two candidates rather than a single candidate. For example, the election of Municipal Councillors, Regional Councillors, MPs into the National Assembly and Senators. Meanwhile, the seats are distributed proportionally where none of the lists in competition obtains an absolute majority, which is 50% + 1.
- **Uninominal system:** The elector is expected to choose a single candidate among several. For example, the election of the President of the Republic, the President of the Senate, the President of the National Assembly, the President of the Regional Council, the Mayor, the President of an Association, or the President of a Political Party. Nonetheless, the candidate who must have obtained a simple majority of the votes cast is proclaimed elected.

**Polling station:** Venue or place laid out for the conduct of voting at a voting centre. Therein are found electoral documents and material, polling booth, ballot boxes, ballot papers, electoral registers and polling station electoral lists, indelible ink, disposal bag, etc.

**Prorogation of mandate:** Special measure that consists in extending the holding of an elective position or exercise of a mandate beyond its normal duration.

**Quota:** The notion of quota refers to the setting of a representation percentage for a group of persons (men and women) in the holding of decision-making positions within public institutions. The international community recommends 30%, African Union 50%. At the political level, this mostly benefits women who are less-represented.

**Rate of abstention:** Percentage of persons entered on the electoral registers that refuse to vote. This rate discredits the legitimacy of the elected representative.

**Rate of participation:** Percentage of persons entered on the electoral registers, who effectively cast their votes.

**Recompilation of electoral registers:** This is a complete resumption from zero of the vote register.

**Referendum:** A popular poll that allows citizens of a country to respond by “Yes” or “No” to a fundamental question that affects the life of the nation.

**Regional Council:** The deliberative body of the region.

**Regional Councillor:** The locally-elected representative, member of the Regional Council.

**Revision of electoral registers:** An activity that consists in updating old registers that had already served in past elections. According to Section 74 (2) of Law No.2012/001 of 19 April 2012 relating to the Electoral Code, the annual revision of electoral registers commences on 1 January and closes on 31 August of every year.

This is an exercise that concerns persons who have changed residence, those who have reached voting age (20 years), and those who failed to enter their names on the old register. Whenever there is an election in the course of the year, registration must absolutely stop once the electorate is convened to the poll.

**Secession:** An action carried out by a fraction of the population of a State in view of separating, either peacefully or violently, from the national sovereignty (State) to form their own entity.

**Scrutineer:** A man or woman designated by the candidate in an election and acting on their behalf during voting operations, (verification, counting of ballots and publication of results). The scrutineer plays the role of electoral agent during the counting of votes and ballots retrieved from the ballot box after voting. The scrutineer is entitled to a copy of the election report.

**Simple or relative majority:** A case where no candidate or list obtains 50% of the votes cast. In such a case, victory goes to the candidate or list that has obtained the greatest number of the votes cast.

**Substitution (replacement):** A mode of fulfilling an elective mandate that guarantees permanence and continuity of representation by enabling an alternate to replace the substantive member of the mandate under conditions provided for by law. However, in reality, the status of alternate is not defined by law in Cameroon

**Suffrage:** A means by which a choice is expressed, such as a ballot, vote.

**To vote:** To freely choose or not, the person or the list of persons expected to act in the name of the group. This group may be a decentralised local council, the population of a Region, the population of a State.

**Universal suffrage:** A means by which all citizens who meet the eligibility conditions can cast their votes.

**Vote:** Election, suffrage, act of voting, electing, choosing.

**Voter register:** An official document in which the name, date and place of birth, names of parents, occupation of electors duly registered voters are entered within a given electoral constituency.

**Voting age:** This is the age set by law when every citizen becomes eligible to vote. In Cameroon, that age is set at 20.

**Voting centre:** This is a place where several polling stations are prepared. Concerning the presidential election in Cameroon, the entire national territory constitutes a single constituency. In such a case, electors duly registered abroad vote in Cameroonian Embassies and High Commissions.

However, a special administrative warding decreed by the President of the Republic may cause a modification of electoral constituencies.

**Vote counting:** An operation that consists in opening envelopes containing ballot papers, counting votes per candidate or per list in competition.

## **CHAPTER II: ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR DUTIES**

The present chapter throws light on the role and functions of the elected representatives of the people. Elected representatives refer to the President of the Republic, Members of Parliament, Senators, Regional Councillors, Municipal Councillors and the Mayor. What are the exact meanings of these terms? What does each of these political officials do? What are their duties and obligations? These are the questions to which the present chapter intends to provide answers.

## **The President of the Republic**

The President of the Republic shall be the Head of State; he/she is the supreme authority of the country. He/she shall be the elected representative voted by the entire nation.

He/she shall embody national unity, which means that he/she shall be the President of all Cameroonians, from North to South, East to West, without any discrimination whatsoever.

The President of the Republic shall define the policy of the nation both within and without and vis-à-vis other countries. He/she shall ensure compliance with the Constitution. He/she shall ensure, by way of personal arbitration, the regular and uninterrupted functioning of government services. He/she shall be the guarantor of national independence, of the protection of citizens, of the integrity of the territory, of the permanent continuity of the State, of the observance of international treaties and agreements.

He/she shall appoint the Prime Minister, Head of Government and, on the proposal of the latter, the other members of Government and puts an end to their functions.

He/she may dissolve the National Assembly; create and organise State public services; appoint persons to State civil and military duty positions. He/she shall be elected for a seven-year renewable term of office.

## **Members of Parliament**

Members of Parliament (MP) shall be elected representatives of the people. They shall represent the Nation at the National Assembly. They shall defend the interests of all the people of Cameroon, although elected within a particular constituency. They shall ensure the social and political guidance of the people. They shall serve as relay between their people and the National Assembly. They shall defend all ideas of their party at the National Assembly.

They shall take part in debates in the National Assembly and may propose private member bills. They shall vote laws that govern the nation and control Government action.

The laws voted by MPs shall be submitted to them in the form of draft bills by the Executive Arm (Government), or private member bills tabled by the legislative (Parliament). They may do so on account of their sound knowledge of the needs of the people.

MPs must also be very conversant with the realities of their country, be capable of analysing problems, reading and understanding documents submitted to them, make unbiased proposals and find solutions to problems that require their views. They must be capable of participating and contributing honourably in parliamentary debates and deliberations, for they are not mere spectators of the parliamentary scene; they are actors who must come up with constructive ideas that can ensure the development and wellbeing of the population. MPs shall be voted for a five-year term of office.

### **Senators**

Senators shall represent the decentralised territorial authorities of their Region where they were elected by the college of Municipal and Regional Councillors, or designated by the President of the Republic. They shall participate in deliberations and vote laws.

They shall propose, in collaboration with the Bureau of the National Assembly, the appropriation allotted for the funding of political parties.

### **Regional Councillors**

Regional Councillors shall be local representatives who shall defend the interests of the Region. Regional Councillors shall be men or women of sound morality. They shall be in charge of the full management of activities of the Region that they shall represent.

### **Mayors**

A Mayor shall be the chief Municipal Executive of the city. He/she shall be, above all, a Municipal Councillor, elected by his/her peers (Municipal Councillors). He/she shall represent the locality in which he/she shall rule. A Mayor shall represent the inhabitants of his/her council, without exception. As part of decentralisation, a Mayor shall exercise powers transferred by public administrations. The duties and tasks of a Mayor shall include:

- Convening and chairing Municipal Council meetings;
- Managing the council's assets (forests, buildings, land, etc.);
- Preparing the draft budget and action plan for the council;
- Creating municipal public services;
- Devising the land occupation plan;
- Offering development and construction possibilities on all council land;
- Managing proximity infrastructure (stadia, schools, museums, ...);
- Ensuring the security of persons and property, in collaboration with the forces of law and order;
- Taking charge of problems relating to public health, hygiene and sanitation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE);
- Providing lodging for vulnerable social categories like physically-challenged persons, women in distress, elderly persons;
- Lending financial and material support to local associations whose activities contribute to the wellbeing of citizens or to improve their living conditions;
- Ensuring management of the human resources placed under their authority;
- Celebrating marriages;
- Issuing and certifying civil status documents (birth, marriage and death certificates);
- Ensuring the enforcement of police laws and regulations, under the supervision of the local administrative authority;
- Assuming technical and administrative responsibility deriving from decentralisation;
- Issuing extreme poverty certificates. etc...

In conclusion, Mayors shall facilitate and ensure management of all activities of the Council for which they shall be exclusively responsible. It must be stressed that the Council shall be responsible for the development of the Sub-division.

## **Municipal Councillors**

Municipal councillors shall be locally-elected representatives. Their duties shall correspond to those of the Mayor at their village level. They shall play the role of relay, link and guide between the council and population to whom they shall transmit and explain decisions taken by the Council. They shall also transmit to the council grievances of the inhabitants of the villages they shall represent within the Council. They shall inform, sensitise and educate the population of their constituency: They shall be Advisers of the Mayor.

A good municipal councillor must be competent and honest. They must earn respect and confidence from the population they shall represent and shall propose constructive and innovative ideas. Municipal Councillors shall be voted for a five-year term of office.

## **CHAPTER III: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

## **STAGES OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

This process shall be governed by Law No 2012/001 of 19 April 2012 relating to the Electoral Code, amended and supplemented by Law No 2012/017 of 21 December 2012 of the Republic of Cameroon, it comprises three phases:

- THE PRE-ELECTION PHASE (pre-election operations): shall be meant to update the voter registers, conceive or design electoral material/ documents and take specific measures to ensure smooth running of elections
- THE ELECTION PHASE: During this phase, the following activities shall be carried out: election campaign and propaganda, strategic planning, voting operations; counting of votes and declaring of results;
- THE POST-ELECTION PHASE This phase shall be meant specifically for the settlement of electoral disputes.

### **I. PRE-ELECTION OPERATIONS**

This phase shall concern the operations that shall take place between the 1 of January and 31 of August every year irrespective of the election calendar; These operations shall involve the enrolment of voters, recompilation of electoral registers, as well as the issuing and distribution of voter cards.

#### **I.1. ENROLMENT OF VOTERS**

Citizens of voting age who are fit to vote shall ensure that they are enrolled on the voter registers during the legally prescribed period when the earmarked operations are going on; Registration on the voter register shall not be optional; It shall be a civic right and duty that citizens must perform; Electoral registers shall be drawn up by ELECAM's local branches in conjunction with the competent joint commissions. Electoral registers shall be important election support documents that should be reliable.

#### **People who shall be allowed to enrol on the voter register**

With no sex discrimination, any person of the Cameroonian nationality who is 20 and above and not legally incapacitated, shall have the right to be enrolled on the voter register. Section 46 of the Electoral Code clearly spells out the requirements for enrolment on a council voter register as follows:

- Cameroonian citizens who enjoy the right to vote and who have a place of abode or have been residing within a council area for at least six (06) months,
- Citizens who shall not fulfil the age and residence requirements during the recompilation of lists but who later meet the said conditions before the final closure of the enrolment exercise or the day of election;
- Military personnel and those who rank as such with no residence condition;
- Citizens who have been paying their taxes for the past five consecutive years within the said council area;
- In the previous case, the application for registration must carry an attestation of non-enrolment on the voter register issued by the ELECAM branch based where the applicant resides.

**What about women who are married to persons of foreign nationality?**

Any Cameroonian woman, married to a foreigner shall retain her Cameroon nationality, unless she expressly renounces it at the moment of marriage (Section 32 of the Cameroonian Nationality Code). In concrete terms, any woman whose husband is not of Cameroonian nationality and who has not renounced her Cameroonian nationality may register on electoral registers and may also be candidate in the various elections.

**Who shall not be allowed to enrol on an electoral register?**

Whoever:

- Has been convicted of a felony, even by default;
- Has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment, without suspension, of more than 3 (three) months or has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment, accompanied by suspension of sentence or probation, of more than 6 (six) months;
- Is the subject of a warrant of arrest;
- Is an un-discharged bankrupt who has been so adjudged either by a Cameroonian court or a foreign judgment enforceable in Cameroon;
- Is insane or of unsound mind.

These electoral disqualifications shall also apply to all elections organised in Cameroon.

## **What are electoral constituencies?**

For the election of Members of Parliament, the division shall constitute an electoral constituency. However, some electoral constituencies could be warded on the grounds of their peculiar situation by a decree of the President of the Republic.

For the election of Senators, each Region shall make up an electoral constituency (Section 217 (1) of the Electoral Code).

For the election of Regional Councillors, each Division shall constitute an electoral constituency (Section 247 (1) of the Electoral Code);

For the election of Municipal Councillors, the Council shall constitute an electoral constituency.

For the election of the President of the Republic, the national territory shall constitute the electoral constituency.

## **Some other important issues pertaining to enrolment on voter registers**

An electoral register shall bear the names of all registered electors who have been residing in the council for at least 6 (six) months.

The electoral register shall further contain the names of electors who have been registered under the provisions of Section 46 of the Electoral Code. Such registration may not be carried out automatically. It shall be done only at the express request of the elector who must first adduce evidence that their name does not appear on another register.

No person shall be allowed to have their name entered on more than one electoral register or several times on the same register.

Where an elector is registered several times on the same register, only one registration must be considered valid. Such elector shall automatically be struck off the other registers.

## **Can a citizen be denied enrolment on a voter register?**

In principle, any person who shall satisfy the conditions of eligibility shall be entered on a voter register; In order to vote, a citizen must be enrolled on the voter register; This enrolment shall not be optional; No citizen shall not be allowed to be enrolled on more than one voter register;

Any refusal to register an elector must be justified and notified to the elector concerned. Such refusal may be disputed or challenged before the Divisional Supervisory Commission or the Electoral Board as the case may be.

### **Which official document shall be required at the time of registration?**

Registration shall require a National Identity Card or a receipt of the National Identity Card alongside the birth certificate.

### **Where shall a person register?**

Registration shall be at the level of a joint Revision Commission and/or recompilation of voter registers based in the council of the place of residence of the concerned.

## **I.2. DRAWING UP VOTER REGISTERS**

Voter registers shall be drawn up by *Elections Cameroon branches*, in conjunction with the competent joint commissions; The following two methods shall be used to carry out this operation i.e. revising or recompilation of voter registers.

### **Revising the voter registers**

A commission shall be set up, in every council, charged with the revision of the voter registers. Where the area or size of the population of the council so warrants, the Director General of Elections may set up several commissions to revise the voter registers.

### **Members of the commission to revise voter registers**

The commission to revise the voter registers shall be composed as follows:

**Chairperson:** a representative of Elections Cameroon, appointed by the Divisional Branch Head of Elections Cameroon;

#### **Members:**

- A representative of the Administration, appointed by the Sub-Divisional Officer;

- The Mayor, or a Deputy Mayor or a Municipal Councillor, appointed by the Mayor;
- A representative of each legalised political party operating within the territorial jurisdiction of the council concerned.

The Sub-Divisional Officer, the Mayor and each political party must, within at least 15 (fifteen) days before the revision of the voter register commences, notify the Council Branch of Elections Cameroon of the names of their representatives appointed to sit on the said commission

Where a political party fails to appoint a representative within the limited time, the Head of the Council Branch of Elections Cameroon must, after an unheeded formal notice, refer the matter to the Senior Divisional Officer who then shall appoint a council official to sit on the commission as the representative of the Council.

The composition of each commission to revise voter registers shall be approved by a decision of the Head of the Divisional Branch of Elections Cameroon.

The duties of the members of the revision commission shall be honorary.

#### **Activities of the commission to revise voter registers**

During the period of the revision of electoral registers, applications for expunging names or for modification shall be submitted to the commissions provided for under Section 52 above. Such commissions must carry out the corresponding operations.

The commission shall expunge from the register the names of: deceased persons; persons ordered to be struck off the register by the competent judicial authority; persons who no longer meet the conditions laid down by law; persons found to have been wrongfully registered.

In compliance with the provisions of Sections 74 and 76 of the Electoral Code, the revision of voter registers shall commence from the 1 January and end on the 31 August of every year. This exercise shall comprise three main operations:

- Adding names of citizens who meet the conditions laid down by law as well as those that were omitted;
- Expunging from the voter register the names of: deceased persons; persons ordered to be struck off the register by the competent judicial authority; persons who no longer meet the conditions laid down by law and persons found to have been wrongfully registered;

- Modifying voter registers following any change of residence or clerical errors noticed especially regarding the full name, parentage, date and place of birth of electors.

A separate voter register shall be drawn up for each polling station within every council area.

Where there are many polling stations within the same council area, a general or common voter register shall be drawn up bearing indications of the various polling stations.

The voter register shall be a permanent document. However, it can be revised annually by the competent commission.

The work of the commission may be validly carried out by a single member provided that all the other members are kept informed of such work prior to its completion.

At the end of its proceedings, the voter register revision commission must draw up a report, signed by the President and commissioners (Section 52 of the Electoral Code).

### **Shall citizens be allowed to register outside the periods of revision of voter registers?**

The following persons may be enrolled on the voter register outside revision periods, without any residence requirements:

- Civil servants and employees of the public and private sectors who have been either transferred or placed on retirement after the closing date for registration, as well as any member of their families who are living with them on the date of such transfer or retirement;
- Servicemen who have been demobilised after the expiry of the time limit for registration;
- Private sector employees who have been either transferred or placed on retirement.

Applications for enrolment on voter registers outside the revision period must be supported by all relevant information and submitted to the Council Branch of Elections Cameroon.

In keeping with Section 88 of the Electoral Code, applications shall be examined by the Commission charged with the Revision of voter registers within a period of 9 (nine) days before polling day. The decisions of the commission shall be made known to the persons concerned immediately. The commission shall enrol the voter and enter their name on the additional list that shall be published latest 04 days before the polling date.

### **Recompilation of voter registers**

The Director General of Elections may, after obtaining the assent of the Electoral Board, order by decision, a recompilation of the voter registers; notwithstanding the annual statutory recompilation.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 74 (1) and (2) of the Electoral Code, the annual revision or if need be, the recompilation of voter registers shall be suspended as from the date the electors are convened.

In case of recompilation of voter registers, the Director General of Elections may extend the period provided for in Section 74 (2) above by no more than 3 (three) months.

In case of recompilation, entirely new voter registers shall be drawn. The following persons may be entered in the voter register: citizens who meet the conditions laid down by law; citizens whose names were previously omitted (Section 76 of the Electoral Code).

Recompilation shall entail cancellation of old registers to start afresh. In this case, the voter registers and files in the keeping of ELECAM shall become outdated, null and void.

### **Current conduct of the recompilation of voter registers**

In Cameroon, the State has introduced the biometric recompilation system in a bid to improve and modernise the recompilation of electoral registers. This option is intended to afford reliability on the one hand and ensure higher transparency of the electoral process on the other hand. The biometric system shall involve administrative and technological elements as follows:

- Use of registration kits;
- Extension of the census period;
- Use of six finger prints;
- Issuance of a receipt upon registration of voters;
- Distribution of voter cards as soon as they are ready after cancellation of double registration;
- Detection of double registration by the National Centre of Biometrics.

*Elections Cameroon* (ELECAM) shall conduct the biometric recompilation of electoral registers (Law No.2012/001 of 19 April 2012 mentioned above).

**How shall the biometric recompilation of voter registers be conducted?**

Any citizen who wants to be registered shall:

- Present his/her computerised National Identity Card for identification
- Allow for their passport-sized photograph to be taken using a camera;
- Affix 06 (six) fingerprints on the scanner built into the enrolment kit.

**What shall be issued to electors upon registration?**

- Upon registration, the elector shall be issued a receipt bearing the same information as the voter's card. (parentage, photograph, finger prints, name, date and place of birth).
- This receipt issued must not be falsified. It shall serve as proof that the person concerned is already enrolled on the voter registers. The elector shall be expected to produce it before withdrawing their voter card.

**Can a registration receipt replace the voter card?**

No, the registration receipt shall not replace the voter card. Thus, ELECAM shall have the duty to print all the voter cards before the polling date. In any case the voter cards shall be available within a reasonable deadline of 40 days.

**I.3. ISSUANCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF VOTER CARDS**

In every Council, there shall be one or several commissions charged with supervising the issuance and distribution of voter cards.

**Where and when shall registered persons withdraw their voter cards?**

Voter cards shall be collected at the level of the local commission charged with the issuance and distribution of voter cards. Every elector whose name has been entered on the electoral register shall be issued a biometric voter card which shall bear their full name, date and place of birth, parentage, photograph, finger prints, occupation, domicile or residence.

Where voter cards are renewed or new names are entered on the voter register, the cards shall be distributed within a period of 40 (forty) days before the polling day.

However, in the event of recompilation, the distribution of voter cards shall be carried out during registration or once the cards are printed, when the technical conditions have been met.

Voter cards not delivered to their legal holders shall be left at the polling station where such holders are registered and shall remain at their disposal until the close of the poll.

Such cards shall be delivered to the legal holders only upon presentation of their National Identity Card or the registration receipt.

In every polling station, at the close of the poll, the Commission shall count the unclaimed cards, stamp and place them in a sealed packet which it shall take to the Council Branch of Elections Cameroon with the election report specifying the number of such cards.

### **How shall polling stations be created?**

The Director General of Elections Cameroon shall draw up the list of polling stations for every council. The list shall indicate the jurisdiction of every polling station. Every polling station shall have at most 500 (five hundred) voters. Polling stations shall be located in public premises or in premises open to the public.

The list of polling stations shall be forwarded to Council Branches of Elections Cameroon for publication at least 8 (eight) days before the day of election.

## **I.4. CONVENING OF THE ELECTORATE AND FIXING OF THE POLLING DATE**

### **Convening of the electorate**

Electors shall be convened by decree of the President of the Republic. No less than 90 (ninety) days shall elapse between the date of publication of the convening decree and the day of election. Polling shall take place on a Sunday or a day that shall be declared a public holiday and shall last a single day. The decree convening electors shall specify the time of opening and closing of polling stations.

For Senators, the Electoral College shall be convened by the President of the Republic, 45 (forty-five) days at least before the date of the poll.

### **Fixing of the polling date**

The fixing of the polling date shall be purely a matter of material organization. It is the President of the Republic who shall be competent in choosing the polling date.

For the presidential election, the Constitution of 18 January 1996 stipulates that the electorate should be convened at least twenty days and at most fifty days before the end of the term of office of the incumbent. This principle is reflected in Section 1 (3) of the Electoral Code.

With regard to parliamentary elections and excluding the case of absolute necessity”, i.e. crisis situation, the President of the Republic after consulting the President of the Constitutional Council, the Bureaux of the National Assembly and Senate may submit to the National Assembly a draft bill to either extend or shorten their term of office. In this case, elections shall be held 40 (forty) days at least or 60 (sixty) days at most after the expiration of the extension or abridgement period. Section 15 (4) of the Constitution and Section 1 (4) of the Electoral Code clearly stipulate that elections shall be held latest the last Sunday after the expiration of the term of office.

Concerning Municipal Elections, the deadline shall be the same as indicated in Section 1 (4) above which states that “the provisions of Law No 91/020 of 16 December 1991 to lay down the conditions for electing Members of Parliament shall apply in the same manner to Municipal Councillors excluding the special provisions fixed by the Law.

## **I.5. NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES**

Nomination of candidates shall be carried out in conformity with the Statutes and Standing Orders of each political party between the convening of the electorate and the beginning of the electoral campaign. The nomination procedure shall be explained or laid down in documents such as circulars and similar documents that shall provide the guidelines on the various modes of nomination, notably:

- Expression of intent to be a candidate;
- Primaries;

- Nomination (endorsement);
- Publication of candidatures by the political party;
- Declaration of candidature;
- Co-opting.

The Electoral Board shall publish the list of candidates at least 15 (fifteen) days before the day of the poll. The Constitutional Council shall be immediately notified thereof.

## **I.6. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS**

The electoral campaign shall be the period during which the candidate shall present his/her political platform to the public. To prepare for a campaign, all teams that can contribute in coordinating and conceiving actions to be carried out within such period shall be set up. The complex nature of this task shall call for the creation of a steering structure commonly called campaign team.

### **The creation and organisation of a campaign team**

The brief nature of the electoral campaign and the need for effectiveness shall call for a rational organisation of the campaign team, hence the importance of designating a campaign manager. While Candidates conceive campaign strategies, the campaign manager shall put them into practice. Before selecting the latter, his/her political ideology, degree of commitment and individual skills must be taken into account.

### **Relationship with the media**

Candidate shall forge permanent contacts with the media in view of obtaining maximum media coverage about their person.

### **Leading campaign operations on the field**

The team charged with field operations shall tackle three main tasks relating to implementation of the campaign strategy, namely:

- Combing the field;
- Drawing a schedule of all projected field operations;
- Transmitting directives to potential electors or possible external service providers.

## **Choosing a strategy**

A successful electoral campaign shall depend on the following factors:

- Choice of the field;
- Choice of the voice pitch;
- Choice of the discussion topics;
- Proper holding of meetings, rallies...

## **Conduct of an electoral campaign**

Electoral campaigns shall involve public rallies and activities in the form of meetings, communications and door-to-door drives. During such operations, certain principles must be respected.

### **Authorized activities**

Rallies aimed at explaining, commenting for the purpose of drawing the attention of electors to programmes and manifestos may be organised by political parties that have effectively submitted a list of candidates.

Political parties shall notify their campaign schedules to the competent administrative authority. The said schedules shall be considered as applications for authorization to hold public meetings and activities.

Spaces allocated by the administration for affixing the posters and propaganda material of each candidate must be respected.

### **Forbidden acts, attitudes and behaviour**

- Fighting;
- Insults;
- Threats;
- Attacking institutions;
- Disturbance of public order and peace;
- Defamation;
- Unauthorised rallies and activities;
- Holding of rallies and meetings on public roads.
- With regard to the last point, political rallies and meetings shall not hold on public roads, except on special authorization from the competent administrative authority. Furthermore, the competent administrative

authority may, taking into consideration the prevailing circumstances, fix by order the time after which no meeting may continue.

Committing any of the above-mentioned crimes shall be construed as offences liable to criminal sanctions.

### **Legal penalties pertaining to threats or disturbance?**

Where public law and order are seriously threatened, the administrative authority may, by order, prohibit any such meeting(s). In such a case, the administrative authority must agree with the organisers on a new date or, where necessary, venue to enable them to hold such meeting(s). The competent branches of Elections Cameroon shall be informed of such arrangements.

### **Funding of an electoral campaign**

Politics requires money. Thus, movements, drafting of documents, canvassing for support, taking care of electors, holding of meetings and rallies shall require liquid cash to cover the ensuing expenses.

Two main sources for funding electoral campaigns shall be considered:

- Public funding;
- Private funding.

There shall also be the possibility of raising fund from sympathizers.

### **Public funding**

- Section 275 of the Electoral Code states that legally recognised political parties and groups may receive public funding in the context of their electoral missions;
- Section 276 of the Electoral Code specifies that public funding also concerns both the routine activities of political parties and those devoted to the organisation of election and referendum campaigns;
- This contribution by the State shall be defined in the Finance Law relating to the year of organisation of each poll. Such expenditure shall be mostly meant for:

- Conceiving, editing and printing of messages and releases;
- Organisation charges for meetings;
- Transportation and hiring of material...

Such financing considered as public funds shall not be used for other purposes in order to avoid legal action for misappropriation of public funds (Section 184 of the Penal Code).

**Shall all political parties receive the same amount?**

No, State funding which shall be disbursed in two instalments, shall take into account participation in the last election, the number of seats won and the number of lists presented and accepted in the different electoral constituencies.

**Shall a political party be allowed to receive foreign funding?**

In keeping with Law No.90/56 of 19 December 1990 relating to political parties, and Section 278 (1) of the Electoral Code, it is forbidden for any political party to receive foreign subsidies or funding.

**What shall be the other advantages afforded by the State to political parties?**

In addition to funding, the State shall make available broadcast time for the different candidates to express their ideology on State audio-visual media, which shall have the duty to cover the campaign activities of all political parties.

The State shall also print the campaign ballot papers of all political parties. These ballot papers shall be given to the political parties on the eve of the opening of the electoral campaign.

**Private funding of electoral campaigns**

Regardless of public funding, a campaign may be funded by the personal resources of candidates, members and sympathisers of political parties.

Law No.90/056 of 19 December 1990 mentioned above provides that any political party may receive gifts and donations, furniture exclusively from its members or persons living in Cameroon.

## **Building of social capital**

As part of strategies towards mobilising resources, candidates may also organise *fundraising*, which shall constitute an opportunity to gather funds to support one or several candidates.

## **II. ELECTION OPERATIONS**

These operations shall take place on the polling day, from the opening to the closing of polling stations, under the supervision and authority of the local polling commission: These operations shall include:

- Opening and closing of polling stations;
- Monitoring and checking of voting operations;
- Counting of votes, publication of local tallies and handing over/forwarding of election reports.

### **II.1. OPENING AND CLOSING OF POLLING STATIONS**

Polling stations shall open at 8 a.m. and close at 6 p.m., in keeping with the Electoral Code and the decree convening the electorate to the poll. In this regard:

- Chairpersons of the Local Polling Commissions must, at the start of polling, take note of the time of opening of the poll which they shall mention in their report.
- Before the first elector casts their vote, the Chairperson of the Local Polling Commission must publicly open the ballot box to ascertain that it is empty and has no opening, then lock it under the checking of the other members of the polling station and, where applicable, in the presence of any other accredited person.

The Local Polling Commission shall comprise:

- A Chairperson: a personality appointed by the Director General of Elections Cameroon.
- Members:
  - A representative of the Administration, appointed by the Sub-Divisional Officer;
  - A representative of each candidate, list of candidates or political parties.

Where the quorum is not formed at the opening of the poll, the Chairperson of the polling station shall replace the members absent and mention it in the election report.

## **II.2. MONITORING AND CHECKING OF POLLING OPERATIONS**

### **Who shall be allowed to have access to a polling station?**

Monitoring and checking of polling operations shall be done either directly or indirectly by the following people:

- Electors registered in the polling station who have not yet voted.
- Candidates or their representatives;
- Duly accredited election observers;
- Representatives of ELECAM;
- Administrative authorities.

### **How shall voting be conducted?**

Electors shall:

- Go to the polling station with their biometric voter card and their National Identity Card;
- Submit to the verification of their name on the voter register of the polling station;
- Collect ballot papers of the different political parties or candidates in competition as well an empty envelope;
- Enter the polling booth where they make their choice,
- Put the ballot paper of the chosen candidate or list in the envelope and throw the ballot papers of the candidates not chosen in a disposal bag provided for that purpose;
- Come out of the polling booth;
- Show to the polling commission that they are in possession of only one envelope;
- Slot their envelope into the ballot box;
- Cause their vote to be evidenced by affixing their fingerprints on their voter card and signature against their name on the polling station register (Sections 103 to 106 of the Electoral Code).

### **Shall an elector be allowed to vote several times?**

No, the same elector shall not be allowed to vote more than once, neither in the same polling station nor elsewhere for the same election.

### **II.3. COUNTING OF VOTES, PUBLICATION OF LOCAL TALLIES AND HANDING OVER / FORWARDING OF ELECTION REPORTS**

Vote counting shall be conducted by Members of the Local Polling Commission, assisted by designated scrutineers. Names of the designated scrutineers shall be entered in the report of each Local Polling Commission.

### **How shall election votes be counted?**

Vote counting and tallying shall take place in each polling station immediately after the actual end of voting, in the presence of voters who so desire, provided the hall has space to accommodate them without obstructing the counting exercise (Section 109). The ballot box shall be opened and the number of envelopes contained therein checked.

The result of counting shall not take into account:

- Any ballot paper bearing any signs, marks or signature by which the elector may be identified;
- Ballot papers contained in envelopes bearing signs of a similar nature or in envelopes other than those officially made available to electors;
- Any ballot paper other than the officially printed ballot papers.

Ballot papers so declared invalid and, if need be, envelopes containing such ballot papers shall be attached to the report which shall mention the number of such invalid ballot papers.

Ballot papers found in the ballot box without any envelope and envelopes found empty shall likewise be regarded as invalid and mentioned in the report. Counting sheets shall be attached to the report.

### **How shall vote counting be conducted?**

Scrutineers shall carry out this exercise as follows:

- The ballot box shall be opened and its content poured out on the table;
- The envelopes shall be counted;

- The envelopes shall be opened and the ballot papers found therein read aloud by one scrutineer;
- A second scrutineer shall cross-check and confirm it;
- The tally shall be entered on the counting sheet, provided for that purpose and written on the board to enable the people present to follow the vote count.

The results of the poll shall be declared immediately after the open vote counting. These results shall be entered in a report. The report, which shall be made in as many copies as there are members plus 2 (two) extra copies, shall be closed and signed by all the members.

This report shall mention the number of registered voters, the number that actually voted, the votes validly cast and the number of blank ballot papers.

The counting sheets shall then be attached to the report.

All these documents shall be forwarded through the fastest means possible, to the competent Supervisory Commission (council or divisional).

The second copy shall be kept in the archives of the Council concerned.

Tallying of votes obtained in each polling station shall be followed by the proclamation of results subsequently by the National Commission for the Final Counting of Votes.

#### **II.4. STAKEHOLDERS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

There are key actors (A) and secondary actors (B)

##### **A- Key actors**

Through the different public institutions, the Government intervenes throughout the whole electoral process .It concerns:

- Mainly ELECAM. It is an independent body in charge of organizing, managing and supervising the entire electoral referendum processes. Its regional and divisional delegations as well as council branches shall carry out operations pertaining to registration, voting, vote counting and compilation of results. They shall ensure proper conduct of all the operations. In some cases, ELECAM shall be the ultimate judge of all the electoral disputes.

- The Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) shall play the role of intermediary between ELECAM and the State.
- The National Communication Council (NCC) reorganized by decree No 2012/038 of 23 January 2012, shall be in charge of allotting to political parties broadcast time on public audio-visual media.
- The Ministry of Communication (MINCOM) has as duty to check and ensure the observance of broadcast time allotted to political parties on public audio-visual media.
- The Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) shall be in charge of security and conveyance of electoral material and logistics to enclaved and remote areas of the country.
- The Ministry of Finance (MINFI) shall be in charge of providing funds meant for electoral operations.
- The General Delegation of National Security (DGSN) shall ensure security coverage for electoral operations.
  
- The Constitutional Council (CC) is the regulatory organ with regards to the functioning of the institutions of the republic. Seasonally, the Constitutional Council plays the role of an arbiter in the political game and is called up to settle electoral litigations that may arise during elections as well as referendums, presidential elections, legislative elections, senatorial and regional elections.it is the Constitutional Council that proclaims elections results in Cameroon;
  
- The Ministry of Justice through the administrative courts is in charge of managing complaints relating to pre-electoral, electoral and post electoral operations ;
  
- The political parties and the candidates are committed to: know and respect the rules of the game; carry out campaign among the electorate, accept the results of voting. They can address their complaints to the electoral authorities.
  
- The electors: their main responsibilities consist of: having their voter's card (ensuring that their names are on the electoral list); to request for information; exercise their right to vote in accordance with the laid down procedures. They can equally address contestations and complaints to the authorities concerned.

## **B Other stakeholders**

- The staff of the registration and polling stations shall carry out specific duties pertaining to the preparation and conduct of operations such as voting, vote counting, forwarding/ return of electoral material.
- The international community. Upon request from member countries; the international community usually sends election observers to the field. The international observers accredited by the government authorities of the host countries shall be subjected to a Code of Conduct. They shall carry out an official assessment on the validity of the entire electoral process and by implication on the legitimacy of the elected persons.
- The Civil Society (CSO, NGOs, individual persons) shall produce national observers. The national observers shall play the same role as their international counterparts. They shall be subjected to the same rules of accreditation and ethics.
- The media shall play a vital role in communicating the right information to voters on electoral matters/ events. More often than not, it happens that the media and specifically the public supervisory bodies that check and regulate media activities guarantee the equitable and unbiased treatment of candidates during electoral campaigns.

**CHAPTER IV: MANAGEMENT OF ELECTORAL  
DISPUTES**

Several cases of litigation may arise during the electoral process.

## **I. PRE-ELECTION PERIOD**

### **An elector may:**

- Enrol on several registers or not enter their name on any register;
- Not have received their voter card;
- Be refused enrolment on an electoral register;
- Have misplaced their voter card.

The Electoral Code provides that such cases must be denounced to the ELECAM Council Branch concerned. These complaints and claims shall be examined by the Commission in charge of revising or recompiling electoral registers and distributing voter cards.

### **A candidate may also:**

- Observe that his/her list has been unduly rejected;
- Note that two days to election day, electoral registers are yet to be published or that they are incomplete;
- Discover that the list of polling stations has not been posted up or that some lists bearing names of ineligible candidates have been accepted.
- Be a victim of defamation of character during electoral campaign.

Defamation as per say, shall cause the disqualification of its author and their accomplices and may lead to court action

## **The Divisional Supervisory Commission**

This Commission shall examine protests and claims relating to electoral registers and voter cards. The commission shall authorise any corrections deemed necessary after examining claims or protests filed in against the decisions taken by the competent commissions relating to electoral registers or voter cards.

## **II. ELECTION PERIOD**

Several scenarios may occur such as:

- Omission of the name of an elector on the polling station register whose number is indicated on his/her voter card;

In such a case, the elector shall indicate this situation to the Chairperson of the polling station for it to be mentioned in the election report. Where a solution is not found, the matter shall be reported to the ELECAM local Delegate.

- An elector has misplaced his/her voter card;

In this case, the elector shall be allowed to vote upon presentation of his/her National Identity Card. Such solution shall also apply to any person who, though enrolled on the voter register, has not been issued their voter card. However, every elector shall be issued his/her voter card upon enrolment on the voter register.

### **The Local Polling Commission**

The Local Polling Commission shall rule on any difficulties relating to the organisation and conduct of the poll and vote counting. In case of a tie, the President shall have the casting vote.

- Refusal to allow an elector vote after the closing time for the poll;

Any elector already inside the polling station or who is awaiting their turn at the door of the polling station at the time of the closing of the poll must insist to exercise their right;

- Discrepancy between the results proclaimed and those contained in the election report;

In such a case, the law provides that only the copy of the election report forwarded to the ELECAM Delegate should obtain.

## **III. POST ELECTION PERIOD**

Ruling on any petition for the partial or total annulment of elections in Cameroon shall involve several institutions.

## **Municipal and regional elections**

With regard to municipal and regional elections, complaints may be lodged before the competent administrative court that shall rule in first instance. Its decisions may be appealed before the Administrative Bench of the Supreme Court. (Section 2 and 114, Law No.2006/022 of 29 December 2006 to lay down and set up the organisation and functioning of Administrative Courts).

Any elector, candidate or person acting in the capacity of a government election officer may petition for the cancellation of elections in the council concerned before the competent administrative court. Disputes shall be presented in the form of a simple petition filed within 5 (five) days following the proclamation of results by the Council Supervisory Commission. The competent administrative court shall give a ruling within 40 (forty) days from the day the petition was filed.

### **What happens to municipal councillors in the case where elections are cancelled?**

The municipal councillors whose election is cancelled shall remain in office until a final judgement is issued.

Where all or part of the election is finally cancelled, by-elections shall be held within 60 (sixty) days following the cancellation. Only the lists of candidates submitted during the general municipal elections shall be qualified to take part in the by-elections.

## **Legislative, senatorial and presidential elections**

The Constitutional Council shall be the competent body to rule on protests and claims relating to senatorial, legislative, presidential elections and referendums (Sections 132, 133, 136 and 139 of the Electoral Code).

This Council shall rule on all petitions filed by any candidate, any political party which took part in the election or any person serving as a representative of the Administration for the election, requesting the total or partial cancellation of election operations.

All petitions filed, must reach the Constitutional Council within no more than 72 (seventy-two) hours of the close of the poll. The Constitutional Council may, if it deems necessary, hear any applicant or request the submission of evidence, and issue them a receipt. To avoid rejection, the petition must specify the alleged facts and deeds. It shall be posted up within 24 (twenty-four) hours of its submission and notified to the parties concerned who shall be allowed 48

(forty-eight) hours to submit their replies. They shall be issued a receipt upon submission.

In the event of cancellation of the election of the President of the Republic, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Elections Cameroon shall immediately be notified. Fresh elections shall be held within no less than 20 (twenty) days and no more than 40 (forty) days from the date of cancellation. The incumbent President of the Republic shall remain in office up to the election and swearing-in of the President-elect, and shall convene the electorate within the time-limit mentioned above.

### **Can the rulings of the Constitutional Council be challenged?**

The rulings of the Constitutional Council relating to electoral operations, election results and candidatures shall be final.

**CHAPTER V: REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN  
POLITICAL LIFE**

Participation by any citizen in political life may be, either through enrolling on a voter register, membership in an already existing political party, or through the creation of their own political party, with the intention of influencing policies or making known their views regarding conduct of the life of the nation. Any such participation in political life shall be by:

- enrolling on a voter register;
- joining a political party;
- creating a political party.

## **I. ENROLLING ON A VOTER REGISTER**

In order to vote, a citizen has to enrol on a voter register. Registration shall determine who an elector is and enable the election officials to know the citizens who shall be allowed to vote. Through registration, they can know the number enrolled that will determine the results.

## **II. JOINING A POLITICAL PARTY**

### **Who is allowed to join a political party?**

Membership in a political party shall be free for all Cameroonians of either sex. Law No.90/56 of 19 December 1990 relating to the creation of political parties specifies that nobody may be harassed due to their membership or non-membership in a political party.

Notwithstanding, it is forbidden for any member of the armed forces and of the police, in active service, to join a political party.

This law equally states that nobody may be a member of more than one political party.

## **III. CREATING A POLITICAL PARTY**

### **What are the requirements to create a political party?**

To create a political party, a file comprising the following items shall be compiled:

- A stamped application, bearing the name, address, full identity, occupation and residence of those who are charged with the leadership and/or administration of the party;
- A criminal record (Bulletin No.3) of its leaders;
- Minutes of the constituent General Assembly printed out in three copies;
- Three copies of the statutes;
- A written commitment, bearing a legalised signature, to comply with the principles set out by law and relating to breach of the territorial integrity, violence, funding and state of belligerence;
- A memorandum on manifesto or political programme of the party;
- A location plan of the party headquarters.

The file thus compiled shall be submitted at the competent Governor's Office against a receipt indicating the submission date and registration number of the file.

The decision authorising the legal existence of any political party shall be issued by the Minister in charge of Territorial Administration.

Where no reply is issued, three months after submission of the file at the Governor's Office, the party is forthwith deemed to exist legally.

### **What are the requirements to become a leader of a political party?**

In keeping with Law No.90/56 of 19 December 1990 relating to the creation of political parties, citizens must fulfil the following conditions:

- Be of Cameroonian nationality by birth or through naturalisation, for at least 10 years;
- Be at least 21 years old;
- Enjoy their civic rights;
- Must not be a member of another political party;
- Be resident on the national territory.

### **Can an applicant be refused the authorisation to create a party?**

Yes, where the file does not fulfil the conditions listed above.

In any case, in keeping with the above-mentioned law, any refusal of the authorisation must be motivated and notified to the applicant through any means, leaving written traces.

The applicant may, where necessary, petition the administrative bench/judge under the conditions laid down by the law.

Such a petition must be filed within 30 days, following the date of notification to the individual or to their home.

#### **IV. CANDIDACY REQUIREMENTS TO THE VARIOUS ELECTIONS**

##### **FOR THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS**

The candidate must satisfy the following conditions:

- Enjoy their civic rights;
- Be a member of a legalised political party and be nominated;
- Show proof of effective residence of at least 6 (six) months within the area of the council concerned;
- Be enrolled on a voter register;
- Be of sound mental health.

Where these conditions happen to change after they are elected, the municipal councillor concerned shall be removed from office as of right.

Such a person may also lose their capacity as municipal councillor upon resignation or exclusion from their party.

Furthermore, the candidate must:

- Be at least 20 years old;
- Be of Cameroonian nationality or naturalised Cameroonian of either sex for a minimum of 10 years;
- -The offices/ duties of Governor, Secretary-General at the governor's office, Senior Divisional Officers, Sub-Divisional Officers and their assistants, police officers, gendarme officers, servicemen, prison administration officers and, secretaries-general of councils, municipal revenue collectors and council service heads, legal and judicial officers, Government Delegates of Urban Councils and their Deputies shall be

incompatible with the office of municipal councillor within the administrative unit of their jurisdiction.

### **FOR REGIONAL ELECTIONS**

The candidate must satisfy the following conditions:

- Be of Cameroonian nationality of either sex;
- Enjoy their civic rights;
- Be member of a legalised political party and be nominated;
- Show proof of effective residence of at least 6 (six) months within the area of the council concerned;
- have a home on the regional territory concerned for persons who are non-resident;
- Be enrolled on a voter register;
- Be of sound mental health;
- Appear only on one electoral list or belong to not more than one political party.

### **FOR LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS**

The Constitution of Cameroon provides that Parliament comprises two Houses: The National Assembly and the Senate.

As of now, the National Assembly is functioning with 180 Members of Parliament whose election is subject to conditions set out by the single Electoral Code, notably:

- Be of Cameroonian nationality;
- Be at least 23 years old on election day;
- Be enrolled on a voter register;
- Enjoy the right to vote;
- Be able to read and write English or French;
- Be a member of a legalised political party and be nominated.

### **FOR SENATORIAL ELECTIONS.**

The candidate must satisfy the following conditions:

- Be at least 40 years old on the day of election or appointment;
- Be of Cameroonian nationality of either sex;
- Enjoy their civic rights;
- Be member of a legalised political party and be nominated;

- Show proof of effective residence of at least 6 (six) months within the area of the council concerned;
- Have a home on the regional territory concerned for persons who are non-resident;
- Be enrolled on a voter register;
- Be of sound mental health;
- Appear only on one electoral list and belong to not more than one political party.

**FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

Conditions for election to the Presidency of the Republic are laid down by the Electoral Code.

Candidates must:

- Be of Cameroonian nationality by birth;
- Be 35 years old and above by the date of election;
- Show proof of having resided in Cameroon for an uninterrupted period of at least 12 (twelve) months;
- Be enrolled on a voter register;
- Enjoy their civic rights;
- Be either nominated by a political party or an independent candidate, on condition that they are endorsed by at least 300 (three hundred) dignitaries hailing from all the regions, with 30 signatures from each Region. Persons who qualify to append such signatures must be either Members of Parliament or of Trade Chambers, or Regional Councillors, Municipal Councillors, or First-Class Chiefs.

**V. DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FROM CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIVE POSITIONS**

**Table 1**

<b>Type of Elections</b>	<b>Documents required</b>
<b>Municipal Elections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A declaration of candidacy in 03 copies, shall contain the full names, date and place of birth, filiation, occupation, residence, the name of the list and political party sponsoring such list, the symbol selected for the purpose of printing ballot papers or of identifying the party, the name of the representative</li> </ul>

	<p>of the list, and the address of his residence ;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A certificate of payment of 50 000 FCFA into the public Treasury (article 183 of the Electoral Code) ;</li> <li>- a copy of birth certificate, not more than three (03) months old ;</li> <li>- a certificate of nationality ;</li> <li>- a criminal record (bulletin n° 3), not more than three (03) months old ;</li> <li>- A declaration by which the candidate testifies, on his honour, that his name appears only on that list and that he is not the object of any of the disqualifications provided for by the law;</li> <li>- a tax certificate or a tax exemption certificate;</li> <li>- an attestation of registration on electoral register ;</li> <li>- an attestation of abode or residence in the council concerned, issued by the competent administrative authority ;</li> <li>- an attestation by which the political party sponsors the person as candidate. (Art 182 Electoral Code )</li> </ul>
<p><b>Regional Elections</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A declaration of candidacy in 03 copies, shall contain the full names, date and place of birth, filiation, occupation, residence, the name of the list and political party sponsoring such list, the symbol selected for the purpose of printing ballot papers or of identifying the party, the name of the representative of the list, and the address of his residence ;</li> <li>• A certificate of payment into the Public Treasury of the caution (article 183 of the Electoral Code ) ;</li> <li>• a copy of birth certificate, not more than three (03) months old ;</li> <li>• a certificate of nationality ;</li> <li>• a criminal record (bulletin n° 3), not more</li> </ul>

	<p>than three (03) months old ;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A declaration by which the candidate testifies, on his honour, that his name appears only on that list and that he is not the object of any of the disqualifications provided for by the law;</li> <li>• a tax certificate or a tax exemption certificate;</li> <li>• an attestation of registration on electoral register ;</li> <li>• an attestation of abode or residence in the council concerned, issued by the competent administrative authority ;</li> <li>• an attestation by which the political party sponsors the person as candidate. (Art 182 Electoral Code )</li> </ul> <p>(Art 257 Electoral Code)</p>
<p><b>Legislative Elections</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a copy of birth certificate, not more than three (03) months old</li> <li>• a criminal record (bulletin n° 3), not more than three (03) months old;</li> <li>• A certificate of payment of 1.000 000 FCFA into the public Treasury</li> <li>• - a certificate of nationality;</li> <li>• A declaration by which the candidate testifies, on his honour, that his name appears only on that list and that he is not the object of any of the disqualifications provided for by the law;</li> <li>• a tax certificate or a tax exemption certificate;</li> <li>• an attestation of registration on electoral register ;</li> <li>• an attestation of abode or residence in the council concerned, issued by the competent administrative authority ;</li> <li>• an attestation by which the political party sponsors the person as candidate. (article 165 of the Electoral Code )</li> </ul>

## Senatorial Elections

- a copy of birth certificate, not more than three (03) months old
- a criminal record (bulletin n° 3), not more than three (03) months old;
- A certificate of payment of 1.000 000 FCFA into the public Treasury;
- - a certificate of nationality;
- A declaration by which the candidate testifies, on his honour, that his name appears only on that list and that he is not the object of any of the disqualifications provided for by the law;
- a tax certificate or a tax exemption certificate;
- an attestation of registration on electoral register ;
- an attestation of abode or residence in the council concerned, issued by the competent administrative authority ;
- an attestation by which the political party sponsors the person as candidate (Art 231 Electoral Code)

**Presidential Election**

- A nomination paper made in two copies bearing the full name, date and place of birth, occupation and residence.  
The colour, emblem and name chosen for the printing of ballot papers.
- A list of 300 signatures from dignitaries required for independent candidates or candidates nominated by a party not represented in the National Assembly, the Senate, any Regional or Municipal Council;
- a copy of the birth certificate, no more than 03 months old;
- A letter of presentation and nomination by the candidate's party, if need be.
- An affidavit by which the candidate commits to abide by the Constitution.
- Non Conviction Certificate (Bulletin No.3), no more than 03 months old.
- A tax certificate or a tax exemption certificate.
- A certificate of nationality.
- The original of the certificate of payment of CFA 30 000 000 F deposit into government Treasury.

**N.B.:** Upon request, copies of birth certificates required for determining the age of electors and candidates are issued free of charge on an unstamped paper by every municipal authority (Section 295 of the Electoral Code). These documents must be solicited at the place of birth of the applicant.

**CHAPTER VI: STRATEGIES TO BOOST AND OPTIMISE  
FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LIFE**

To improve political participation of women, it is crucial for any woman who wishes to enter politics to change her negative perception about it on the one hand and master her institutional, social and cultural environment on the other hand. This will enable her to develop befitting strategies that will equip her to face the challenges pertaining to her militancy; knowing fully well that her goal is to ensure her leadership.

To achieve the expected result, extra effort is required to enable women to fully enjoy their civic rights in the domain of politics. These efforts must exceed the mere quotas agreed upon and have to overcome the persistent obstacles so, as to tackle the issue of women's under-representation in an effective and sustainable manner.

### **I. Historical benchmarks in the political life of women**

In Cameroon, women's interest in politics is neither absent nor recent.

In a bid to take part in politics, Cameroonian women formed a federation of women's association dubbed National Council of Cameroonian Women.

1952: a female party known as Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women (UDEFEC) was created. These two movements were negatively perceived and consequently swallowed up by the party in power (CU).

Thus in 1962, the National Council of Cameroonian Women joined the Cameroonian Union (CU) party at the request of the latter. In 1966: the CU party became CNU and all the mass groups merged within this party.

This merger confined the woman to a role of symbolic crowd-pullers and to that of providing catering services to the decision-making organs of the party; they did not participate in policy deliberations of the party.

This oversight witnessed a socio-institutional change that culminated into the creation of a Ministry of Social Affairs at the helm of which was appointed Mrs. TSANGA Delphine as the very first female minister in Cameroon. The ensuing achievements include greater access for women to education, vocational training and employment on the basis of the skills acquired. Most of such trainings were gender- biased.

With the return to the multiparty system in 1990, the situation of women, however, remained unchanged; they only featured in the ruling bodies of political parties in symbolic proportions and more so, in window-dressing positions.

In a bid to improve on the prevailing situation and make the Cameroonian women become a major stakeholder in development, the political power

incarnated by President Biya has taken several measures aimed at equipping the women with appropriate means and increasing their political representation.

## **II. Socio-cultural and political environment**

Despite the improvements realised, the Cameroonian women still face obstacles with regard to their political participation and nurturing of their leadership. Most of those hindrances are related to both socio-cultural misconceptions and practices (customs, traditions, religion, popular perception) or to the functioning of the existing political parties that reduce the possibility for women to vote or to be a candidate to an elective position. Other obstacles that hinder directly or indirectly the participation of women in political life include inequality in political training and access to education and various resources, domestic workload, lack of adequate social services.

### **Socio-cultural practices and misconceptions**

Women's access to political leadership still faces reticence and in some cases a negative interpretation relayed by religions, notably that the woman must be submissive and obedient to the man.

Despite the fact that the Bible provides examples of dynamic and powerful women who contributed to the transformation of their society, or to the liberation of their people, a secondary role is granted to female leadership models cited in the Sacred books since they are not acknowledged for having participated in any fundamental transformation.

### **Domestic role of the woman:**

The priority in orienting the social role of the woman continues to be narrowed down to her initial devolutions of maternity and guardian of the household. This explains the resurgence of cultural prejudices and perceptions pertaining to the domestic role of the woman and her inferiority or her inability to take her destiny into her hands.

### **Women's strange behaviour and attitudes**

Women's drive force is usually hampered by:

- Indiscipline
- Sterile rivalry
- Gossip
- Lack of solidarity
- Lack of ambition
- Lack of confidence and self-esteem

All these obstacles constitute moral violence that hinders the capacity of the socio-cultural enhancement of the woman.

### **Functioning of political parties**

- The three-component structure of political parties presents a leading organ largely opened to men and two annexed organs called specialized organs meant for women and the youth. This situation does not favour the emergence of women.
- The official political activity for women is, in many cases, limited to traditional activities behind the scenes such as convening meetings, serving refreshments, doing clerical work, mobilising and canvassing for votes from electors generally for others and ensuring animation. Other obstacles include:

The existence of so-called specialized female organisations that wield no influence and hold no authority;

- The lack of funding and a kind of assistance scheme to support female candidates within political parties. This leads to a superficial increase of political women;
- The difficulty in being selected as a candidate for an elective position. Women make up (fill gaps) for deficient lists;
- The non-promotion of female candidates illustrated by the fact that female candidates are either encouraged in constituencies where the party is likely to lose or are replaced on the lists;
- Decision making and women investment. At this level, three main causes of female low representation in political spheres can be identified as follows:
  - a poor access to education, training and information;
  - Family duties which are incompatible with political agenda or calendar;
  - Lack of financial resources and solidarity networks.

### **III. Strategies to distinguish Cameroonian political women**

To ensure their distinction, Cameroonian women must, in addition to their traditional roles, indulge in other activities which are more civic and republican such as:

#### **At personal level**

- Be capable of carrying out an objective self-assessment with regard to the exigencies of political commitment;
- Develop physical, moral and intellectual qualities that favour their political agenda;

- Strengthen their ability to mobilise human, material and financial resources;
- Copy great female political models around the world.

### **At the socio- cultural level**

- Have the capacity to create and manage relationships with others (associations, politicians), and collaborate with authorities and other community leaders.
- Obtain basic skills and further training;
- Brandish and showcase during awareness campaigns female success models in view of a change in behaviour;
- Concretise cohabitation by accepting others and making differences in daily life.

### **At the economic level**

- Search for personal resources through Income-generating activities, professional activities as well as contributions from funding;
- Be able to carry out rational management of financial and human resources;
- Look for support from partners (spouse, friends, families, networks).

### **At the political level**

- Conquer positions in ruling organs;
- Build a solid foundation by mastering the geographical and demographic limitations as well as the political coverage of their constituencies;
- Rise above considerations linked to segregation, tribalism, defamation and rejection;

Transcend social acts and statements that are likely to hamper their political commitment (inhibiting declarations and, tribalism or tribality tendencies);

- Create their own political parties;

Develop and carry out advocacy nationwide to support female political leadership.

### **At the institutional level**

- Step up the level of practical assistance provided to women by creating a full department to monitor the civic and social rights of women in MINPROFF;
- Create a directory of politically-active women, associations and their professional profiles.

### **At the level of funding**

To participate in political life, women must:

- Have their own financial resources and savings;
- Carry out income-generating activities;
- Solicit support from financial partners, in keeping with the regulation in force.

## CONCLUSION

For several years in Cameroon, the importance of women and their role in society are gaining recognition. Thus, for women to assert their civic commitment, participate fully in decision making and play a forefront political role, they need to know how to seize opportunities and chances that come their way.

Despite the fact that the political field is dominated by men and the general opinion that women should be left out of the political game, the women themselves should not be confined within associations but instead, should be involved in politics given that there is a change in mentality.

Women are therefore called upon to vie for political positions and amass votes.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **The Constitution**

that defines the rights and freedoms of citizens as well as the organisation and separation of political power (legislative, executive and judiciary). (Preamble, Art. 5, 6 et 7, Art. 14 and 15, Art. 20, Art. 55, 56, 57 ;

### **Laws including:**

law n° 2012/001 of 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012 on the Electoral Code modified and supplemented by law n°2012/017 of 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012.

## **EDITORIAL TEAM**

- General supervision:** Madam ABENA ONDOA née OBAMA Marie Thérèse  
Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family
- General coordination :** Mr. MOUSSA AOUDOU, Secretary General,
- Drafting :** Mr. ABESSOLO ASSEKO Calice, Director of Women's Social Empowerment  
Madam BEKONO Bernadette Françoise, Sub-Director  
for the Promotion of Women's Rights
- Proofreading:** Mrs. NEBAH born NDOSIRI Bridget NDOYE, Inspector N°2
- Support to editing:** UN-Women :
- Mr ADAMA MOUSSA, Resident Representative of UN-Women Cameroon;
  - Mr NGORO Joseph Bonaparte, Specialist of Program ;
  - Madam MENGUE ANGO Valérie, Specialist in charge of Gender, Leadership and Political Participation Program
- Collaboration**
- SENATE**
- Madam ENO LAFON Emma Vergele, CPDM Senator;
  - Madam BEKONO Lucie, CPDM Alternate Senator for Mfoundi;
- National Assembly**
- Honourable ATANGANA Hélène, CPDM Parliamentarian for Nyong and So'o;
  - Honourable OTTOU Jeanne épouse NTSAMA BELINGA, CPDM Parliamentarian for Mfoundi ;
  - Honourable ESSOMBA BENGONO Engelbert Alain, Alternate Parliamentarian for Mefou and Akono.
- Partner Ministries**
- Madam NDALLE NGOLLE Anne, Head of the Litigation Unit, MINATD;
  - Madam KEMBO Hermine, Sub-Director for Human Rights, MINJUSTICE.

## **Political parties**

Madam MBAH ONANA Labatut Marie, Member of OFRDPC National Bureau ;

Madam ANGOING née NDANGA Françoise, Inspector General in MINPROFF, CPDM Section President of Kadey ;

Mr. AMARA François Xavier, Secretary of CPDM Sub-Section for Mefou and Akono South-West ;

Madam BELA Lucie, Municipal Counsellor at the Yaounde VII Council ;

His Majesty BILOA EFFA Paul Marie representative of the national President of CRM ;

UNDP Representative.

## **Decentralised Local Authorities**

Madam AMOUGOU NOMA Régine, Mayor of the Yaounde IV Council;

Mr. ZANG MBA Dieudonné, Mayor of the Mbalmayo Council;

Madam ESSOMBA NGAYENE, 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant to the Mayor of YaoundeVII Council;

Madam NDOUMOU Perpétue, Municipal Counsellor at the Yaounde IV Council.

Mr. ZOA MBIDA Come Parfait, Municipal Counsellor at the Yaounde IV Council;

Mr. MVOGO MFOMO Jean, Municipal Counsellor at the Yaounde VII Council.

## **ELECAM**

Madam Patience ELANGO FULE, Head of the Division of Communication and Public Relations

## **Civil Society**

### **Organisation:**

- Madam DIFFO TSAFACK Elise, representative More Women in Politics;
- Madam NGATCHOU Denise, President of the NGO Horizon-Femmes;

- Madam ONGUENE representative of the Director of the United Nations Centre for Democracy and Human Rights;
- Madam Pierrette MEMONG representative of the President of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms.

**Secretariat:**

Madam ZAMBOU Rose (Secretary-DPSF, MINPROFF)  
Mr. PENDA TIMBA Auguste Sylvain (Staff DPSF, MINPROFF).