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The Role of Women in Conflict Solving in Cameroon: As Compared to the role of Women in African Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Cameroon with its diverse cultural background, is still seen as the African miniature in terms of the daily activities of people in that nation. Women in Cameroon influence the fundamental part and activities of that society. The Catholic Women Association (CWA) has been a central force, in putting the community to enforce certain rights of its community dwellers.

This study considers the role of women in conflict resolutions and the contributions they make with their traditional methods to ignite peace in the community in Cameroon. The study entails developing a gender perspective of peace building policies and projects at the local level. Thus embarking on the contribution of African women on the best practices of peace building and mediation techniques, as well as adopting the agenda for the culture of peace in Africa.

The CWA has showcased some of the conflicts witnessed in the community with both the husband and the wife in marital issues, boys and girls in assaults, children left on their own with no parental care. These cases have been tried in the ‘local court room’ of the CWA and fines labeled on those who were found guilty. They administered cases in their courtroom could have gone civil courts but because it was quenched down and settled by the CWA, it did not go further. Thus the intervention helped to adopt a restoration justice approach in preventing and solving conflicts in the community. They either used the punitive methods which was for defaulters to pay some little amount of money or local consumer food stuff like ‘palm oil’ etc.

The data from this thesis was gathered during my field work based in Buea municipality which covers the villages like Maumu, Bova, Bonakanda and Buea central etc. The participant observation done in the branches of the CWA and oral interview given to head women and selected women in each of the branches. From the data being uncovered, it is clear that in the community of Buea, CWA has formed an integral part for resolving peace and bringing order in the community. Playing an important role in harmonizing broken families, peace Centre.

In conclusion, the with my observation The Catholic Women Association(CWA) has been able to show some changes that has taken place for the voices and decisions of women to be heard and seen by the African men in the milieu of African culture and philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CWA- Catholic Women Associations

CDC- Cameroon Development Corporation

NGOs- Non-Governmental Organization

WUCWA- World Union of Catholic Women Association

TAMWA- Tanzania Media Women Association

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CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

This chapter discusses about my particular concern of the topic, what is the attribute of the research. This chapter also discusses the methodological framework within which the study has been undertaken. It describes the research techniques and the procedure carried out on the field which is the oral interviews and the questionnaires to be used and my direct observations of the Catholic Women Association (CWA) group in Buea. This includes Research History (The traditional mediation of conflicts by women in Cameroon). The role of women in conflict solving in the Roman Catholic Church (CWA). The relevance of the study. The chapter also describes the research responds of the hypothesis as well and the research responds of the questions. The field work was concentrated in Buea municipality and because it is the administrative capital of the South West region. Also the Buea municipality covers all the villages for the research.

1.1 My concern

My focus is basically on the exclusion of women in Cameroon and Buea in particular in playing a role in conflict solving. How are they involved in conflict solving and how is it vital and contributive for them to be part of it in their community. If they are part of conflict solving meetings, how important this will play in their families in knowing how to maintaining peace. Thus the paradigms in which women in Africa, Cameroon and Buea in particular are being measured, do not tie with the Universal declaration of the Human Rights laws. Cameroon culture and Africa as a whole, the culture states women to stay quiet when men are talking. Meaning, not to be involved during conflict solving meetings or any important meeting in peace building. The voices of women in Cameroon should be heard through various medium, be it in the church, international meetings, and in the village community meetings with the men. The perpetrating factor forbids women in some villages not to go to farm, when men have their secret society meetings, because it is alleged that they can by chance see what they are doing. This segregation makes women to feel withdrawn and not powerful enough to deal with their personal issues with their confidence towards men.

From my childhood I know mothers always stay quiet I remember when my mother took in a meeting mixed with men, they could not speak freely. But when in a meeting where it was only the women, they could express themselves and talk freely. In one dry season, I witness something which was kept in my memories till now. Between those seasons the rains were beginning to come, and everyone was preparing and ready to plant new crops. One lady went to her farm for harvesting of some crops, in this period of time is between March in the year where old crops are being harvesting for the planting of new crops for the raining season. She saw a thief in her farm about to harvest her ‘plantains’ a kind of green bananas. Instead of the thief to run away he was heading towards the woman with his cutlass to frighten the woman.

As if that was not enough, he raped her, tore her dress, cut the ‘plantains’ and left the farm. Telling the lady she is just a mere woman and cannot be above him. The woman went to the local village council or court’ and reported the man. The man was summoned by the chief for hearing in that native court. He came for the woman’s greatest surprise this man was one of the judges instead. He was sitting among those to judge the case of the victim. So the woman took her stand in the judgment box, but where is the man who will stand as the assault, she will question herself inside. The only witness she carried was the torn clothes with her to the native judgment seat. Better still she is a woman not to talk too much in such gatherings, no single woman was in that midst of men, all who could hear about the victim’s story were hanging outside in the window, she will only sob alone, when she was asked to narrate the entire story and the man stood up and said. ‘This woman, has wanted me to sleep with her and she invited me to her farm and gave me a bunch of plantains to not tell anyone, I took the plantains and she torn her clothes herself and was hold me and I had to break loose from her’’. As the woman was struggling to tell the other judge that is a lie and crying and remaining the judges that the man said no one can take him to the chief, she was sent out of the native court room and she was told to shut up. I began to wonder who women are. Another species of human beings? They lack expression and the women always feel inferior to the men, in solving their own conflicts, they find it difficult to talk and express themselves, some have died without knowing who they really are.

The participation of women through religious institutions and the ethnic groups during ceremonies in Buea municipality has been under-looked. The central part of this paper dwells on bringing the diverse religious practices in harmony with other religions among Christians and traditions with different religious doctrines. Women’s role in the Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon in Buea municipality is still seen as in the old traditional belief system of religious

philosophy. The main problem too is that women are seen as of the weaker sex and virtually as second when it comes to decision making and to be heard. Especially with the fact that women in Cameroon tradition limits their actions towards nation building.

1.2 What is the attribute of the research/research question

What is the Role of Women in the Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon in the Buea Municipality in Conflict Solving: As Compared to the Role of Women in African Philosophy. This is my research question and is the base of what I looked for. The role of women in the Roman Catholic Church has triggered my findings in order for me to know if the African philosophy about women to stay quiet during meetings still remains the same. Thus it entails looking at the different roles which women are in peace building and conflict solving. Thereby elaborating on specific duties that they need to be carried out by women to make them qualified to be part of this functions for peace building mechanisms. Meanwhile also to look at the church roles in helping the women to play this vital part in peace processes in the community. Which is to say; Has Christianity helped women to break the traditional African cultures and Cameroon culture to get into the arena for peace and conflict resolution meetings?

The concern here is to see how women take part in resolving conflict in the midst of the men and to know the pertinent role women play during those conflict resolution meetings.

Do men take their opinions if they are accepted to take part in these meetings or they are just listeners? If their views are taken, do they accept only women from a particular family background or from a particular religion? What are the reactions of women for them not being accepted? And their reactions to towards changing any negativity of men not involving them in taking part in resolving conflicts, especially in a conflict where they themselves and their fellow mates or colleagues were victims and they were witness to it. The women are they active also in fostering peace within the community in which they live or are they passive when it comes to conflict solving and peace building or their religious background brings a barrier for them to participate in this hearings and sittings during conflicts?

What has the role of women in conflict resolution in Cameroon in the Buea helped in peace building in the local communities?'

Are the local communities satisfied with what the women (CWA) has provided them in Buea municipality?'

How has the CWA ideas or women been integrated into Modern Cameroon Society

Is this group (Catholic Women Association 'CWA') used in a positive peace building or conflict solving forum in Cameroon?

Why are women always silent in gatherings when men are talking during a conflict resolution meetings in the community?

Research hypothesis

The role of women in conflict resolution in Buea is still an ongoing task for women to be emancipated in Cameroon in the phase of conflict resolution vis a vis opposing factors of tradition of that society.

1.3 Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to find out the role women play in implementing peace in the phase of conflict. Also to examine how men have been able to allow women to be part of negotiating and resolving peace building during conflicts. In the African traditions and Cameroon culture, a woman is considered as someone to stay with the children at home and to speak less where and when men speak. Especially when the men are discussing pertinent issues in the community. If she does that or forces herself to speak among men, she is seen as violating the traditions or cultures of the Cameroon society. (Raymond G.2005).

The main concentration lies in looking at the women in the Buea municipality where I was born and know how a girl child is raised up and the way they are seen in that particular society. The inheritance which is patrilineal has a very huge impact on the role of women to be involved in conflict solving issues. Women play a very important role in peace building in their families through their prayer groups, and sometimes family talks and friends. These institutions are the vital places for interactions in the society. Which when is not well handled, society can fall apart. But when a woman is seen as a property, she finds herself unworthy and it kills her self-esteem to foster the way she will carry out peace building in another level. The boys, girls, women, men seek advice of peace from older traditional women; this is because they are seen in the society as people of wisdom. (Delancy 2000).

The Bakweri (Buea) has largely been Christianized since the 1970s, the evangelical denominations dominate, particularly the Baptist church. Christianity plays an important role in

the Bakweri regions, where majority of those who go to church are women. The dominance population in the Buea municipality is strangers who came from other parts of the country to come settle in this area of the Bakweri people. Are women seen as property, which is why they cannot own property? I have to find out to see if this notion is still there following the traditions and customs of the Bakweri people in modern times. . (Raymond G.2005).

The objective of this thesis is also to see into it that women are seen as contributors for peace building in the society. Better still their role in conflict solving can be documented as has always been the case with the men. The voices of women should be heard in all medium of communication especially in situations where they are the most vulnerable. For example in war torn areas, rape situations and many other domestic violence to women and their children.

1.4How (Methodology)

My finding is specified on the methods which both suit the respondents in the field. This is mainly on qualitative approach. In most social sciences, qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviour, value system, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. (Bryman 2012).

In order to gain the insight of the people, Buea (Bakweri people), I used them as a case study because the women in this area are seen as property following the African traditional philosophy. The primary source adopted is oral interviews based on semi structured questions, because the women in the Buea municipality are rural women who can express themselves more when they talk. And a direct observation was carried out to gather the data.

A qualitative method in its most basic form involves the analysis of any unstructured data, including open ended survey responses, literature reviews, audio recording, pictures and web pages.

A semi structured questions is a qualitative method or inquiry that combines a predetermined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further. A semi structured questions or interviews does not limit respondent to a set of pre-determine answers (unlike a structured questionnaire). It allows respondent to discuss and raise issues that you may not have considered. (Bryman 2012)

1.5 Methods of Data Collection

This thesis collected data based from primary and secondary sources which is the qualitative approach. Most social sciences use the qualitative approach to gain insight into people attitudes, behaviours, value-systems, concerns, and their culture (Bryman 2012).

The data obtained through oral interviews, focus group discussions, 'witnessed tried cases' of victims and perpetrators, which was the primary source, and was validated using secondary data from books, research reports, journal articles. The information from published sources was analyzed using content analysis. The findings were then extrapolated from the competing arguments from the diverse group of respondents in relation to the secondary sources through some of the hearings of cases. This represented an effective method of conveying original results based on a study like this which was seen in a different perspective as in a modern society.

1.5.1 Oral Interviews

The interviews which aims at collecting description of the life-world of the interviewees with the intention of interpreting the described phenomena. (Bryman 2012).

I adopted a semi structured directional interviews with questions such as open ended and the interview followed a script to a certain extent, in order to understand meanings and knowledge of the respondents. (Bryman 2012:471).

The criterion used for choosing group members was random sampling to describe interviews as conversation between interviewer respondents in order to clarify certain response. On a good note participants were chosen based on their knowledge of interaction of the subject in which they were interviewed. On a clearer note the women in Cameroon and Buea municipality in particular are rural and very smart when it comes to matters of peace building in the community. On the educational level only some few women who head the Catholic Women Association I asked them to signed certain papers for me to meet the women n their houses to go deeper with my interviews. This helped me to be fast in taking down some responses.

An oral interview also helped in dealing with relevant information. And again since one can make a follow up to questions it was appropriate for me to use them to enquire more information. It also helped me to have a chance of direct interaction with the group ¹(CWA).

1.5.2 Oral Interview Question Specific Objective

To examine the role of women in Roman Catholic Church in Buea municipality in Conflict Solving. As compared to the role of women in African philosophy. The study sheds light on the role of Women in conflict solving: case study of the Catholic Women Association who live in the local community in Buea. As compared with the African traditional philosophy of the old times during the pre-modern society. They women live alongside with the modern concept of women in Africa.

1.5.3 Direct Observation

Direct observation in the form of continuous monitoring was adopted in order to identify the Catholic Women Association's functions and procedures. I observed a number of things in the CWA. For example, kinds of acts conducted in the CWA, kinds of cases addressed, how are they solved and by whom: Generally I was there to observe what is going on at the CWA group with the hope of getting natural occurring data: usually direct observation is a method with which a researcher observes and record behaviour, events, activities, tasks and duties while something is happening.

During direct observation, it is common for an observer to engage in recording as accurately: there is however an element of "pseudo-face" because the people observed usually perform better under observation due to the attention paid to them.

On the other hand there could be an element of subjectivity of the researcher because the information recorded depends on the researcher's observation.

However, the observation was done with couple interviews in order to avoid subjectivity and wrong judgments as much as possible while observing. Direct observation is the most naturalistic non standardized procedure because it occurs in the natural environment, therefore

¹The CWA group(Catholic women Association)

with direct observation one can observe samples of naturally occurring behaviours (Bernard 1994)

1.6 Questionnaires

I designed a questionnaire consisting of structured questions with probing. A questionnaire is a set of carefully constructed questions designed to provide systematic information in a particular subject. (Bryman 2012).

1.7 Research History

1.7.1 The traditional mediation of conflicts by women in Cameroon.

This study concerns the place and role of women in conflict solving in Cameroon. This analyses the cultural ethnic and religious background and regions of the country. Thus looking at the concept of peace and conflict in Cameroon cultural area, in light of the place and role of women in that context. Some questions were asked to guide me get the knowledge of my survey in Cameroon.

Ngongo-Mbede asserts that in almost all the cultures of Cameroon peace was equated with 'freshness', health, well-being, harmony, calm and tranquility. The absence of such qualities was seen as the sign of conflicts which could be either latent or overt. It was that harmony and freshness which brings good crops and fishermen to have abundant catch as well as the hunters of animals. That means when there was enough food in the house, the family, clans, and tribes. Then peace reigns for the entire family. Thus no envy is thrown to anybody as everyone in the neighbouring villages have theirs and they could live in peace and even visit one another in times of funerals and weddings. Because the contribution of women in such roles to maintain peace in the community was evident. (Ngongo-Mbede 2003:28).

He also said women in other categories played the same role in other societies like in the North west province of Nwa subdivision in 'lus-mfumte society, the 'Nkwuyi²' where women took part in discussion in solving conflicts. They play the role of mediators. In this community these women are influential and feared because they are in a secret society called 'Djudju' whose

²Nkwuyi... tradition court room where women discuss peace after a conflict

members are just women. The role of these women is to maintain peace in the community. But it was seen that later the men seized the "djudju" from the women on the grounds that the women were neglecting their duties in the farm and in the house. (Ngongo-Mbede 2003:30).

Therese-Dejean support the fact of peace with women from Central African Republic. She said the violence which broke out in Bangui in 1996 and 1997 showed the Central Africans that peace was not a natural state of affairs but a political and cultural asset which needed to be protected and put together each day. From the early signs of the violence, the Central Africa women mobilized themselves at once to look for peace and resolution of the trouble that stroke. This intervention of peace from women was not new in Central Africa Republic. 'Central African women have always constituted the ultimate bulwark against the murderous folly of men each time social harmony of life has been threatened'.

Therese further said, she made interviews of women between 35 and 80 years of age in Bangui, which is the capital of CAR which has a representative of all the tribes of the country, she then found out that, the importance of the role of women in the society and the restoration of peace makes up a strong defence of violent outbreaks of social conflict. (Therese-Dejean 2003:35).

Becker talked about the need for a gendered and cultural-specific perspective on conflict resolution and peace building. Thus she considers the role of women in decision-making and conflict resolution and in the contribution of women in the traditional setting of peaceful conflict resolution in Namibia. Furthermore studies have showed that, there has been little documentation about women involvement in peace building activities. Besides traditional conflict and peace building has focused on inter-state relation and nation-states as actors in making of war and peace. The experience of ordinary women at the grassroots has been omitted in the domain of peace making and peace building. (Becker 2003:47).

Conflict resolution refers to a political process through which the parties in conflict eliminate the perceived incompatibility between their goals and interests and establish a new situation of perceived compatibility (Deutsch, 1973; Fisher, 1990; Kriesberg, 1992). It usually ends with an agreement, negotiated by the representatives of the two opposing groups, that outlines the details of the settlement in such a way as to allow the negotiators to view their respective goals as not being contradictory. Conflict resolution can also be seen as a psychological process, because it requires that the negotiators will change their beliefs regarding their own goals, the other group's goals, the extent of contradiction between these two sets of goals, the conditions

of the political environment, the situation of their own group, the situation of the adversary group, or combinations of any or all of these beliefs (Kriesberg, 1992; Ross, 1993; Worchel, 1999). In the context of intractable conflict, it is assumed that formal conflict resolution is only a necessary phase on the rocky road of peacemaking (Wilmer 1998). Of special importance is the process of reconciliation through which the parties in conflict form new relations of peaceful coexistence based on mutual trust and acceptance, cooperation, and consideration of each other's needs. This is when the peace process becomes sustainable – thus the concept of sustainable conflict resolution.

1.7.2 The role of women in conflict solving in the Roman Catholic Church (CWA).

I have not been able to lay hands on any literature about the role of conflict solving of the Catholic Women association (CWA) in Buea, but I saw documents of some seminars held in the Buea Diocese to the women, on how to strengthen their call to God and be strong in their calling and faith in Jesus. Their main role in this group is based on spirituality as an example of the Virgin Mary the mother of Jesus. She is a role model for the women of CWA. So they copy her example as the mother of Jesus who was very humble and respectful to the whole community. Also they have been training programs offered by the central office of the CWA to all the women in the branches on Income Generating Activities (IGA). Where the women were involved in starting small projects in their communities on how to rear fowls and goats. They were also trained on how to make soap locally, which will enable them to sell some and some for household consumption.

1.8 The Relevance of the study

The English speaking region which is where my studies are based with Anglophones not the same with the French speaking. This sometimes makes the culture of the two speaking regions to be conflicting. The way the Anglophones look at women is also different the way the Francophone's look at their women, though there is a very big similarities but there are still some slim differences. This is because the Francophone woman is said to be civilized more than the Anglophone, but nevertheless, they are all African women and fall in the same category on how men look at women in Africa.

Cameroon has been politically stable for a very long time, except lately, during the multiparty, the Anglophones, launched a party in 1990. This period brought some instability for a short

while. But then women have not been heard. During this period, women were now enlightened after they had this Catholic Women Association which started in Buea. As the women were marginalized, they wanted to be seen internationally and heard too internationally after making impacts with the Association of CWA nationwide and Buea in particular. At this time their roles will be portrayed and they will be seen as contributors to their fellow communities.

Women are mothers and they play vital role in the family in peace building. Sometimes in the house, when the man is too hot tempered and takes a rash decision, is the woman that soothes it and calm down the situation for the betterment of the whole family. Thereby bringing peace and harmony in the environment and community at large. Women are peace makers, they go to this meetings, learn and some even train others on how to manage the home, thus the family and community. It is often said' 'if you educate a woman, you educate the nation''. The CWA thanks to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the initiative of Madam Forcha Anna wife of the then Prime Minister and 'first lady' in West Cameroon³ who was providently chosen to serve as the first president in those political turbulent days. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of Bishop Peters, the then Bishop at that time when Catholic Women Association just started in 1964. The CWA mustard seed sown in Buea grew steadily and bore a rich harvest. Within the first few years, Catholic Women's Association was established by committed Catholic women encouraged by Priests in 'Middle Farms' 1964, Tiko 1965, Fiango 1965, Bota 1968, Tombel 1966, Mutengene 1967 etc. These towns are in the South West Region which Buea is the capital. The association at the time was known as 'West Cameroon Council of Catholic Women Association (WCCCW).

³Former Southern Cameroon

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Background of the study

This chapter talks about the history of Cameroon and Buea. The chapter discusses about the origin of Catholic women association (CWA) Buea, the women's role in Cameroon and Buea. The further explanation of this chapter dwells on the methods of the data collection which describes the questions for the oral interview and my direct observation with the women of the group.

2.1 History of Cameroon and Buea

Cameroon is regionally cultural, religious and politically traditional as well as ethnic variety. The country is divided in the British and the French ruled after WW1, which created Anglophone and Francophone regions. The English speaking regions consists of the South West and North West provinces and "Pidgin English"⁴ is the lingua franca. The other 8 provinces of the 10 provinces are French-speaking. (Ngoh 1996)

The legal system is based on the statutory law of continental Europe. This region is dominant in numbers and power. Tension between the two regions, that is Anglophones and the Francophones increased after the introduction of the multiparty system in 1990s.

The English-speaking region is divided into two cultural regions the grass fields people of North west province consisting of 100 chiefdoms each ruled by a divine king (fon). The cultures are related to the French-speaking Bamileke of the Western province. The people of the South West province have less hierarchical systems of governance and social organization. The British appointed warrant chiefs to aid their colonial rule. The people in the South West province are the Bakweri who live along the slopes of Mount Cameroon. They practice healings and initiation in association of spirits mediums that distinguish between male and female roles and between village and bush. There is the mountain gods called "epasa-moto" which is believed protects the mountain, which appeasement is made to him. The French-speaking are Muslims, that is the north part of Cameroon and the southern part are Christians.

⁴Language spoken by everyone be it literate or non-literate

The population of Cameroon is 21.7million people in 2012 from 5.4 million in 1960, changing 305 percent during the last 50 years. Population in Cameroon is reported by the World Bank. From 1960 until 2012, Cameroon population averaged 11.7million, reaching an all-time of 21.7 million in December of 2012 and a record low of 5.4 in December of 1960. Cameroon population represents 0.29 percent of the world's total population which arguably means that one person in every 348 people on the planet is a resident of Cameroon.

The National language is French and English with 250 local languages and the flag is Green Red, Yellow with a five pointed gold star in the Centre of the Red strip. The strips represent (3 major geographic areas), green (rain forest) red (laterite soils of savannah) yellow (sands of Sahel), (Delancy 2000).

Buea (Bakweri land)⁵ is the capital of the South West region of Cameroon and is located at the foot of Mount Cameroon called the Fako Mountain. This mountain is said to have a mountain god called 'Epasa Moto⁶' which the natives of Bakweri offer sacrifices to 'Epasa⁷ Moto 'every year. For these sacrifices are done so that the gods will not be angry and the land will be fertile. According to the Bakweri oral traditions, they originated from Mboko and area south west of mount Cameroon and they spread to the coast up Mungo River. It is said they descent from Mokuri or Mokule a brother of the Duala who migrated to Fako mountain for hunting. In addition a few villages such as Maumu and Bonjongo claim some alternate descent and may resent either group whom they expanding Bakweri absorb.

The Germans initially ruled Duala but moved their capital to the Bakweri settlement of Buea in 1901. The colonial's primary activity was the establishment of banana plantations in the fertile mount Cameroon region. The Bakweri were impressed to work there, but their small population led to the colonials to encourage people from further inland to come. The Germans left when they lost the war in 1918 in world war one and their colonies became mandates of the League of Nations. Great Britain took control of the Bakweri lands. Great Britain integrated its portion of Cameroon with neighboring colony of Nigeria, setting the new province's capital at Buea.

⁵ The main tribe which covers the Buea municipality, they live at the foot of mount Cameroon, also known as Fako Mountain

⁶ Sacrifices are done to appease the gods not to be angry and bring famine to the people

⁷ The mountain god who is like a rock but part of it is human and rock.

The British practiced a policy of indirect rule, entrusting greater powers to the Bakweri chiefs in Buea. Buea is noted to be a melting-pot because of the fertile land for agricultural plantation which was large owned by (CDC) Cameroon Development Corporation.

A Bakwerian Dr E.M.L Endeley was the prime minister of the British Southern Cameroon from 1954 – 1959. He led other Southern Cameroonian parliamentarians to secede from the Nigerian Eastern House of assembly in 1954. The settlement of the Bakweri people is concentrated in the South West region which is over 100villages and East and South West of Mount Cameroon with Buea their main population Centre. But the villages I made my findings were concentrated in the Buea municipality with the villages surrounding Buea. That is Maumu, Bova, Bonakanda and Buea central. The Bakweri settlements largely lay in the mountain foothills; they have further villages along river Mungo. There is an ongoing Bakweri land dispute between the Bakweri Land Claims Committee (BLCC)⁸ and the government of Cameroon regarding the disposition of the Bakweri lands formerly used by the Germans as plantations and now managed by the Cameroon Development Corporation(CDC).(Derrick 1990).

This gives an opportunity for me to find out if women are involved in resolving this kind of disputes. Because women are seen as property, land is a property of a man, and women the property of men. Note that Bakweri inheritance is patrilineal; upon the father's death; his property is split among his male heirs. The Bakweri have traditionally practiced polygamy, although with Christianization, this custom has become extremely rare. In the traditional Bakweri society women are chosen as future spouses when they were still children and in some cases, even before they were born. The father or relative of the woman have been paid a dowry, thus the woman is considered as a property to the husband and his families, upon the husband's death, the eldest surviving brother inherit the wife. A husband's property was also intricately linked to the influence of his wife or wives. The wives tended his pigs, goats, cattle, arable land, so no one could trespass or exceed them etc. Comparing with modern times and the African philosophy, religion is seen as "old fashion" and now I want to find out if they are being accepted to take part in conflicts or disputes or disagreements resolution meetings. (Raymond G.2005).

⁸ Bakweri land claims committee formed by the natives of Bakweri tribe who take back the land which were illegally seized by foreigners of corporations or multinational corporations.

Never the less, remnants of pre-Christian ancestor worship persist. Traditional Bakweri beliefs states that the ancestors live in parallel world and act as mediators between the living and God. As might be expected for coastal people, the sea also plays an important role in this faith. Spirits live in the forests and sea and many Bakweri believe that traditional practices holds malign influence on everyday life. Traditional festivals held each year serve as the most visible expression of these traditional beliefs in modern times. Bakweri dances serve a number of purposes. The Bakweri male dance, for example demonstrates the performer's virility. Other dances are purely for the enjoyment such as the "Maringa" and the "makossa" and "ambasse bey" dances that accompany those musical styles. The greatest venue for the Bakweri music and dance are the two major festivals that take place each year in December. The "Ngondo" is a traditional festival of the Duala, although today all of Cameroon's coastal Sawa people are invited to participate. It originated as a means of training Duala children the skills of welfare. Now however, the main focus is on communicating with the ancestors and asking them for guidance and protection for the future. The festivities also include armed combat, beauty pageants, pirogue races, and traditional wrestling. There is also the "Mpo'o" bring together the Bakoko, Bakweri and Limbe at Edea. The festival commemorates the ancestors and allows the participants to consider the problems facing the groups and humanity as a whole. (Raymond G.2005).

The Bakweri people also have assemblies, secret societies and other groups which play an important role in keeping the Bakweri, Bantu language and its origin. More narrowly, they fall into the "Sawa" or coastal people of Cameroon, and very receptive to strangers, that is why the population now is full of immigrants from different regions of Cameroon. (Fanso 1989).

Figure 1 Map of Cameroon



Figure 2 Geographical Site of Buea Municipality



2.2 Origin of Catholic women Association (CWA) Buea

Figure 3 CWA Buea main offices (building of CUIB)



The Catholic Women Association (CWA) structure is attached to the Catholic University in Buea, this is the main structure of the association and other branches report to them. The structure is a modern structure, even sometimes meditation of the church is being carried there as well as the meeting of the women which serve as their own court room. Thanks to modernity of the building, as it has a modern structure where the parish priest sometimes carry out mass or church services in that community. This act being carried out in the structure serve as a very sacred building where, people are careful when meetings are being carried there to settle conflict. People are careful not to tell lies because of the belief they have concerning church and God.

Cameroon as a whole has the tendency of regarding women to be a source of peace, because of the family ties and solidarity that hovers around kinship relationship. The role of women in peace building and conflict solving has been working in this society as far back in the ancestral and Stone Age periods. (Mbuagbor 2005).

This kinship ties has kept a strong bond between neighbouring villages and tribes, clan in all times. There have been tribal wars between villages but women have been the source of peace to bring the warring villages to peace through marriages. I see the case of the Bomuko village and Bova where one of their sons was captured because he was hunting in the forest of the Bova people and they had to capture him as slave for trespassing their forest to hunt. They have been enemies for long, but as they realized, one of their daughter got married in one of the village, they had to make peace during the childbearing of the married children of the land. (Ayuk-Arrey 2006)

Cameroon community set up is that of patrilineal, which mean families associate themselves with their families in order to know their originality from the father's side. Cameroon is made up in such a way that you are able to integrate easily because; names can situate you where you come from and who are your patrilineal lineage. Though it makes it easier but people still have their different norms in the various villages which they adhere to.

The CWA group of women plays the role of a Cameroonian woman, when they still abide with the norms of following instructions of the men to be quiet when they are talking but with respect, they still perform and play their role in conflict solving in the community. When someone calls for help to bring peace in their homes. From the statistics and interviews from the women, it shows that things have changed as their points of view of women are now taken when issues of conflicts or disputes occur. This exercise has been carried out in the community

since women, some of them started going to school and eyebrows were raised by them about their views during conflict resolution meetings. Some from the petty disputes which cannot be carried to the customary court as well as the legal court is being taken to the women of the CWA who will then settle these disputes and bring peace to the people concern. Most of such is very typical among women with their marital issues and sometimes within the women themselves. Sometimes fines are being paid if those involved in the conflicts are found guilty. This form of penalty aims at restoring peace among the people and furthering brotherhood and sisterly love in the community. The head woman in the CWA sometimes is seen as the main judge of the women in the various community when conflicts arises, because she is the one who passes judgment and label fines when need arise. Customary courts at times use her for small and local cases in the community.

The Origin of the Catholic Women Association started in Buea Town which is the Buea Diocese. The Association was established by a committed group of Catholic women in 1964. This occurred during the period shortly after independence and Reunification of the West and East Cameroon; also after the Vatican when there was a lot of political and social awareness among men and women in West Cameroon and a strong desire for their active participation in political and church affairs. Madam Foncha wife of the then Prime minister invited some Catholic women in the Catholic mission Buea to launch an Association for Catholic Women, with the sole objective of building a spiritual path among women of the Roman Catholic Church. Some women were elected as executive in the Association: Mrs. Forcha, Mrs. Chilla and Mrs. Atabong.

Mrs. Foncha visited the Catholic Women's organization in America, and France during her political tours with the view of starting a similar organization. Mrs. Chilla and Mrs. Atabong respectively had contacts with Catholic "Women's League" and "Catholic Mothers" during their study days in England. Rev. Fr. Lucas Atang had met and worked closely with Catholic Women's League in Dublin, Ireland so that on his return to Cameroon he will encourage Catholic women to work on the same lines. These experiences proved very useful at the start of this association. The women discussed the framework of the Organization, the name of the motto, the activities etc. and elected an executive. In 1976 CWA Buea Diocese organized the first ever CWA Congress for all CWA groups in Buea Diocese. The Congress was held at the St. Francis College kumba from 26th Dec. 1976 on the theme "working Together for Better Christian family Living". Members from all the branches created came. After that meeting the

need for animators was foreseen as early as 1975 when the Bishop was contacted. In 1994 two animators were recruited and trained at Pan African Institute for Development (PAID). Which these two women were trained to be engaged on full time basis working with women at grassroots level in the Diocese, helping training, educating and encouraging the women to undertake economic activities. The number of CWA members and groups grew extensively. The women's activities gave room for international Involvement. CWA became an affiliate of the World Union of Catholic Women Organization (WUCWO) as early as 1967 as an Associate Member. In 1978 CWA became a full Rights Member. The World Union of Catholic Women Organization (WUCWO), (founded in 1910), is the International Organization that unites catholic Women Organizations in all the continents of the world and helps them to make significant contributions to the evangelization mission of the Church.⁹WUCWO promotes the education, development and advancement of women in the church and society. CWA, as an affiliate of WUCWO, takes part in International events. On 29th August 1981, WUCWO president General, Mrs. Elizabeth Lyatt Dolan paid a maiden visit to Cameroon. 1967 WUCWO world assembly of Delegates held in Rome Italy.1979 India, Canada 1983, UK 1987, Mexico 1991, Australia 1966. CWA members in Buea Diocese attended and participated. Thus Buea Diocese has not only been a 'founding Ground' for CWA but also an inspirational regarding its growth,commitment,maturity,as well as the light for the Association for the other Dioceses in Cameroon.(web page: introduction origin of Catholic women's association/coordination.cmr).

2.3 Women's Role in Cameroon and Buea

A real Cameroonian woman portrays how a typical rural woman is, that means a woman in 'Buea municipality'. Who then is a rural woman? The estimated population of Cameroon is 21.7 million in 2012 and dominated by women occupying 51% of the population and the rural women makes 65% of the female population. It therefore implies that, the rural woman's is the typical Cameroonian woman. From this statistic it shows that a typical Cameroonian woman is rural and Buea municipality in Cameroon is basically rural where my field research is. So what then is a rural woman's life style? She is that woman who is very hard working, she works from day break to dawn. She is engaged in cultivation of crops for home consumption and the local market, childbearing and upkeep, housekeeping etc. (Ayuk 2003).

⁹ World Union of Catholic Women Organization

She is a very loving and caring wife and mother. Who takes care of the children as well as the husband because, sex is a relaxation which the man expects from the women, based on the fact that in the village there are no electricity or other forms of entertainment available. This is how a woman is being seen in all the villages that form the Buea municipality which is Bova, Mamu, Muea, Bolifamba, and Bonakanda etc. So how has this aspects changed over time? (Arrey 2003).

According to some writers, economic crisis in Cameroon brought conflicts which at some point involved women's role in the phase of standing in the same meetings as men. Women now started thinking; they should step up, and help the house more, not always listening to what men say. Then the men also saw their positions threatened. Women in their various churches organized themselves for prayers of the economic crisis, trying to look for the cause and effects of it and what contributions they can do to help their community with it. (Mbuagbo 2006). The women attributed that that the economic crisis is the "structure of sin" and a deep rooted in personal sin and this always linked to the behavior of incidents (referring here to the political authority) that introduce these structures, consolidate them and render them difficult to be removed. The pastoral letter of the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon of 1990 speaks clearly that the church also attributes the economic crisis to political mismanagement. (Mbuagbo 2006).

Bad governance the RCC¹⁰ and the ¹¹¹²PCC¹³ said contributed to the economic crisis, so their resolving this conflict of economic crisis was the church to cut down subventions and reduce teachers' salaries by 50% which was better than teachers' retrenchment. (Mbuagbo 2006:123). Mbuagbo Timothy (2006) supports that, the Catholic Women Association (CWA) is encouraged by the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church to alleviate poverty amongst women. They help in alleviating poverty during the economic crisis. They helped in providing and promoting education and training for the social and economic welfare of women. This was

¹⁰ Roman Catholic church

¹² Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

a serious social conflict among the women which was met by the women themselves.

(Mbuagbo 2006).

Ngongo-Mbede (2003) supports the fact that; “if the people are poor, therefore the church is and must be a church of poor”. Poverty can be through finance or social crisis.

Apart from the resistance of men because of the traditions and culture in the Cameroon society to allow women to mediate during conflict solving meetings when men are around, “there are also women in Cameroonian society who competently played the role of mediators primarily because of their social position but also above all their strong personality and personal charisma. These women drew their inspiration, first and foremost, from the customary courts, which were structures of conciliation and sentencing.”(Ngongo-Mbede 2003).

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter contains mostly the theory of most African writers and the role women play in conflict resolution and peace building following the philosophical attributes of the cultural patterns of Africa. Some presentation of the theory by authors, who write about peace building and conflict resolutions in the society. The purpose of theory is to present a critical and in-depth evaluation of previous research related to the topic while the theoretical framework identifies and labels the important variables that are relevant to the research problem. . This exercise enabled the researcher to connect the dependent variables with the independent variables and elaborate any moderating variables (Bryman 2012).

Literature review and theoretical framework describes, summarizes, evaluates, clarifies, or integrates existing research related to the area of inquiry. Amongst other purposes, the theory helps to identify gaps in the study area, avoid duplicating the work of others, and increase the breadth of knowledge of the researcher, it provides the intellectual context of the study enabling the researcher to position the study in relation to other works. Then it talks about the relation of the theory with the working group, the Catholic women association and their role and impact in conflict solving in the community. Followed by a conclusion of what the theory implies to the present findings.

3.0 The Philosophical Theory of African women in Conflict Solving.

Michell, J.B in his book; *Quantitative science and the definition of measurement in psychology*. He said, a theory is regarded as a systematically related set of statements including some law-like generalizations those which are empirically testable. It is possible to perceive a number of common characteristics of a theory, which include abstractness, logic, propositions, explanations, relationships and acceptance by the scientific community. The role of theory in the field of social sciences, and where it situates in the research framework has always created a challenge for the researchers consequently all studies must have a solid theoretical basis Michell, J.B (1997).

The main theoretical concepts used in this study are derived from the general theory on conflict and disputes as explained by Shonholtz.

Shonholtz, R. (2003). *General theory of conflict and disputes* According to him, the general theory on conflicts and disputes assigns disputes to transitional and mature democracies and conflicts to authoritarian regimes. The First Premise of the General Theory is that there are no conflicts in democratic society, only disputes. The Second Premise is that in authoritarian regimes there are only conflicts and politicized systems of settlement, not disputes. The Third Premise is that in international relations, national states can transform conflicts into disputes. Conflicts are those issues that lack a legitimate, reliable, transparent, non-arbitrary forum for the peaceful settlement of differences. Disputes, conversely, are pre-described as having recognized forums for their expression and resolution.

Ntahobari Basilisa Josephine Ndayiziga, (2003), in her essay *The role of Burundian women in the peaceful settlement of conflicts*, she puts it that the 'Batutsi and 'Bahutu' had always lived together in the hills, off farming and livestock-rearing, forging close friendships through inter-ethnic marriage in obedience to the same king and believing in the same God. But they still experience conflicts. Under their structures, a woman was recognized as having an advisory role, behind the scenes mainly where her husband was concerned and playing an active part in strengthening solidarity and social harmony generally. (Ntahobari 2003:17).

She says women play a vital role in the education of the children, the management and organization of everything in the home. Women are regarded as the driving force behind the family's relationship with its neighbours. They are the mainstream of the family. That is why, to select a wife in any family, there are a lot of precautions which is being carried out. The education of the girls was based on practical and moral training from their mothers because mothers were expected to particularly be careful about their girls. The girls were regarded as the pride of the family especially as they are to be married one day to another man and to another clan or tribe. A girl who is lazy and unruly will find it hard to have a husband.

By and large, "women in Burundi traditionally do not hold public office of any kind. Men dealt matters of outside the home, while the woman was mistress of the heart. However, even if women were not publicly visible, they took part indirectly, and very much behind the scenes, in the smooth running of public affairs. This was contrary with the fact that, they have important

roles they play in the family, but publicly, they do not hold any post in the public or should not be heard publicly". (Ntahobari 2003:19).

Nevertheless, there were still some women who made reference to women in the traditional society. They played important role in the political, for example 'Nteturuye' also known as 'Nzirikane', these women too were on political and administrative responsibilities within the country when their husbands and brothers went to war or to make their reports to other king and when they themselves held chieftainships. A woman's calling in marriage is to tie, knot or link, binding two families, two clans, two ethnic group or even two nationalities. From an early age girls were taught to be open-minded and tolerant. A girl or a woman is held have a family, since she is destined to live and fulfill herself within someone else's, which she would regard as her own. Similarly, in traditional society, girls were considered not to belong, strictly speaking to an ethnic group. Thus a girl, by her marriage, forged alliances between two families and was consequently the symbol of the unity between them. Women or mothers were called to strengthen family unity and create a bond between families; women naturally had to have the essential qualities to carry out the task. They are supposed to embody such virtues as compassion, patience, discretion, gentleness, modesty and self-control. These were considered inherent in womanhood, but required reinforced through upbringing, so that women could fulfill their role as peacemakers. (Ntahobari 2003:20).

Although during the war in Burundi, which was about 10 years now, women have thrown their efforts into seeking, a peaceful outcome to the violence that is tearing the country apart, as they and the children tend to be the principal victims of the war. Women in Burundi are searching for the solution to the present crisis in their country. That is why educated women, have been on debates and discussions, and highlights on the essential role women must play on how to return peace in the country. (Ntahobari 2003:22).

Oduyage Mercy Amba in her book *African Women, Religion and Health* talks of women and peacemaking, she said the media brings home the reality of war, death destruction, soldiers and civilians who are destroyed by bombs, tortures of prisoners, women and children running to other places to hide or take refuge. The wars seem endless for example during Darfur in Sudan, Burundi and the democratic republic of Congo. Those seen in the wars are mostly males which mean they make the decisions to go to war. The men hold the fate of the country in their hands. She asserts that "how would the world be different if women were fully involved in making

decisions on how nations and people relate to each other? Occasionally there are events in which women take a central role in making peace.” The example of such is seen in Philippines where the women’s demonstration was nonviolent in 1985 which helped the oppression of the Marco regime. She further said in 1956 20 thousand South African women of all races marched to the South African government because of the ‘pass law’. Meanwhile women are mostly kept away during peace building meetings, if they are put in this forum to help with peace building, we will get to know how much, it will help in relationships and international relations. Thus the gospel of Jesus reflects the life of non-violence as the women did in South Africa during their nonviolence march. (Oduyoye 2006:188).

She supports that, there are things women do to disarm the heart during conflict. Statements which can provoke the other party to get angry and begins a conflict, for example phrases like ‘I will beat you ,go to hell with you ‘ translated from Afrikaans to English, can be said in a softer way like ‘I totally disagree with you’. The women brought also a discussion forum on why there are wars and always conflict in Africa? Some say is due to an unending state of colonialism which has not yet liberated the people. Other women talked of conflicts caused by ethnic differences, jealousy, the struggle for power in political parties, and fear as well. Some say conflict is caused by poverty and people who do not have want to steal from others, thus religion and ethnicity are also causes of war like the case in Darfur in Sudan which the Rwandan genocide comes in place because of power, hatred in destroying the lives of people. Thus the women sited that, when the wars in Uganda ended in 1986, living conditions of the people improved, like electricity came after 6 years of no electricity. But now how do we train our children not to revenge as the society has taught them that the only way is to revenge those of your family that have been raped and killed. That is why the wars in Africa goes on and on in All the countries like Sudan, DRC, Rwanda, Angola. How then can this people be healed?

She further explained why women embarked on how they can involve themselves in conflict solving in nonviolent ways. Like in the Zulu tradition or culture, women mostly stop fights by falling over the two fighters and they will stop, this because women are respected and seen as mothers or ‘the person who brings children’ ‘life giver’. This kind of tradition is also with those from Lesotho and Uganda. She points out that in Swaziland the chief forced his brother to become a chief, so the women opposed it by showing their nakedness to the chief. So the killing a deporting of people stopped. Likewise in Namibia the women cooked food for those in the warfront and independence came to Namibia, so a woman in Africa is seen as a symbol for peace. (Oduyoye 2006:202).

She asserts that, actual peacemaking is within ourselves for us to give what we have inside to others. Because you cannot give what you don't have. But for a woman to have this mirror of peace seen in a society, she must be respected. Because women are being violated by men as they see them as objects. Even when a woman for example is to be stoned for adultery, the other women are afraid to speak against it because they fear they will not be supported if they speak. Oduyoye says in a group of women she interviewed, women emphasized that women are gifted in bringing peace. Because women as they are created are more compassionate and emotional. They bring peace and solidarity even to the family as mothers and they are neutral when they want to solve any conflict, not taking sides. Without peace society will lose its values. (Oduyoye 2006:204)

Nyman, Ove (1994) in his book, *The New South Africa*, points out that, 'South Africa is part of African context with regards to culture, tradition etc.' This makes South Africa to be composed of British, Afrikaner and African traditions which is all patriarchal to all of them as they are now all Africans. This particular system has made women to be oppressed by the society and hierarchy is the structure of the South Africa community. This makes sexism to be part of the structure as well, which women are marginalized in that society. The rape of women in this society is very high, especially the black woman who do not have the same security as the white women. These aspects too are due to the economic disparity from the white women and the abuse of alcohol to the men. Basically responsibilities are on the head of the women to raise their family (children). A South African woman will suffer due to class distinction, and when you are placed in the lower class like mostly the black women, the black women will be oppressed. The black women are oppressed by both the white men and white women as they are given low paid jobs with bad working conditions. (Nyman 1994:52).

Nyman asserts that, the characteristics of South African society lies on religion which shows in all aspects of life. The church has inherited a tradition of women being activists in the church, which they work in the church, though they have a few, leading role in the church: This also applies to the society in terms of politics, which is hard to find a woman in the bench of being a politician. After the election and transitional period in South Africa, women though, there will be equality with the women and the men. Women in South Africa were very few in the universities as full time lecturers; black woman was not even in the list of employed.' the oppression of women is seen in a larger perspective, including social, economic, political,

private and theological dimensions. 'this structure in the south African society does not permit a black woman to study, no financial support from the state nor church or tradition permit he women to study. And is not socially acceptable, worst still to study theology because is for men. He says education even today is for those who have money, meaning the whites and some few blacks and even when the blacks have the means to send children to school, it should be the sons and not the daughters. Though the girls have started asking for them to go to school too. That also means, empowering the women which is for them to have power or to be conscious of who they are. This brings change in the role of women, which means changing the constitution which provides a more positive atmosphere for women, that helps them to be educated thereby come against the doctrines which says education is not for the women.(Nyman 1994:55-58).

Nyman says, feminist theology is relatively unknown in South Africa. Because feminist theology in South Africa is part of liberation theologies within the church traditions, because most people who go to church are women. They are the ones who are in charge of the church even though men control it with leading positions. Although it is interrelated with the question of different levels of oppression, the women have to fight. Like the oppression in the public sphere which is in the structure of the society, its cultures, as well as the women's work, and expression at home. Thus a black feminist theologian is not highly qualified and not trained as a pastor but black feminist theology is preached in the grassroots 'in the bushes of nyanga' in Cape Town and in the streets of the Soweto. While a white woman wants to be ordained and for her to be recognized, she fights for total equality for her to also the work of the man. One concrete aspect of a South African feminist theology is culture, as there is not only one culture in that society but many different ones. This brings different ways on how to handle different topics because black and white feminism is not identical. There is also question of class and economy which a black woman cannot afford to study. A black woman is also looking for self-worth, they want to be recognized. Another issue is the method of dialogue in other disciplines like social sciences, psychology, anthropology and philosophy.

He points out that, the women said, because of the oppression of women in the church, the church system must be demolished, which later it can be rebuilt because they want change not just restructuring of the church system. Which means community not hierarchy but egalitarian which represents love. Thus a new symbolism of God's image, which is not being founded on male dominance and female submission but of equal and mutuality of sexes. On the other hand,

male theologians had to argue the views of the feminist theologies on the fact that, men oppress them. They said that women are not committed with what they do. The women do not take the struggle seriously, which means if the women “want to be free they have to devote themselves and become rebellious and radical” “The women focus too much on attacking men, instead of looking at the ways in which they can work together with men and instead for them to use African models in their context to come anything, they use mostly the western models and the “academic theology fails to illustrate and verbalise black uneducated women’s theology, Rev. Courtney Sampson says”.(Nyman 1994:66-80).

Oduyoye Mercy Amba, (2001), in another book, *Introducing African Women’s Theology* she says human being number one ideology is the human community as they depend in the life of community for self-understanding. That is why women follow the traditional norms of the community and the men followed the individualistic ways of life. To the Africans, every aspect of life is being celebrated, hence all signs of abundance and health is celebration. Celebration is seen in festivals which women provide feasts, which gives grounds to those who are rich are kind to others. Sharing is in the African community, which they talk of “community solidarity” which includes all those in the community be it strangers who have come in that community. Thus “the colonization of Africa was an invasion of African culture”. This has to destroy the traditions of Africa, which the men acculturated the European philosophy of individualism. African way of life was brought by ethnocentric European working together with colonial administration and violence which has not ended. Because the Christianity which arrived from Europe saw the African religion as idolatry, this carries Africa away with such ideology. As they Europeans did not tolerate the cultures within religious communities made women in Africa to always talk about that. Although culture is experienced by women as a tool for domination, they also have some good aspects of it. The women also appreciate some aspects of what the Europeans brought like men not to suppress women. At the same time the “contemporary social change in Africa” has the features of battering of the Africa culture by missionaries and global technological culture which have no respect for traditional taboos. All women like mutual dependence, support and correction. (Oduyoye 2001:29).

John S.Mbiti, looks at some perspectives in relation to African religion which portrays that girl before becoming women are taught how to take care of their husband, bear children and how to prepare food and do other domestic affairs. so in fostering the role of peace building which is seen as the men’s area of duty will be like challenging the culture in Africa. Mbiti keeps to the

men dominance and follows strictly the African traditional philosophy as my research states. He asserts that in some Africa societies, the choice of marriage is made by parents and this may be done even before the children are born. This means that if in one household, there is a young boy; his parents go to another household where there is a young girl or where there is an expectant mother. They put an application for the child to be born in the event if is a girl. Sometimes these arrangements may be made before the children are born or they make marriage negotiations when the girl is still very small. (Mbiti 1998:133).

It is inferred that women had been sidelined since even before they were born. The refusal of women not to take part and for them to feel cheated and inferior has been since through birth. Because decisions about their lives were being taken since by the men or “parents”. That is why in the African society, Cameroon is one of them. They practice polygamy which according to men it raises their social status and is a sign of wealth in that society and more children means power and more girls means to get them married to be wealthy (bride price) and to a typical patriarchal society like Cameroon, philosophical, it shows the man is powerful with many wives meaning his control over them makes him strong and his farms have good labour force meaning more wives and children. The society in Africa is patriarchally strong because in most societies the men pay this (bride price) to the wives parents and the wives are all under him and bear him children and have nowhere else to go even when they do not like it. That is why divorce rate in Africa is very low because of the so much money paid through cattle, labour money given to the brides families. (Mbiti 1998:143).

The authors concern is how conflicts are being solved not looking at who are the actors that perpetrate the conflicts especially if the vulnerable actors are involved in solving those conflicts. The vulnerable actors being the women should be so involved when conflicts arise in the community in which they live.

Gunnar Heiene (2011) writes that both victims and those who caused pains have to be involved in talking their stories in a meeting of conflict and reconciliation commission. The oppressed and their oppressors meeting so that both of them can be healed of their pains after hearing each other's stories. This theory can be applied to what happen when women themselves are to speak during a conflict resolution meeting, with their victims, rather than them staying quiet for someone to judge and pass decisions because they are not to speak where men speak. For other victims to hear and witness, stories of others who are being judged, will help them to heal their inner self of their own past experience which was of similar.(Heiene 2011:1)

But they are not allowed to have access, how they are going to express themselves to the needs of their emotions. Even if they come from different religious backgrounds or families.

Accessibility for hearing and speaking should be given to the women. But this has not been the case in many African societies in terms of internal conflict with women involved.

Mbuagbo in his paper. *Economic crisis in Cameroon and the church*,

https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_crisis_in_Cameroon (1990). Looked for the economic crisis more on how to solve it not typically a social problem though it is indirectly a social problem when it comes with economy and the people. Because women, had to take part in looking for means to help alleviate the crisis in Cameroon at that time of Economic Crisis. Women in Cameroon which are typically African women took part to train other women, on Income Generating Activities, like how to make local soap, rubbing oil and how to sew clothes. These activities helped to bring some money in the family. These women, when they are put to carry out peace in a community where they are the victims, the resolution will rather not be seen as biased to them. Though religion is the strongest element of the African traditional background. And it exerts the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the peoples concern. African women will always try to follow it. Women are exempted with matters of conflict solving which is based on the facts of their religion. But women have been playing their roles in solving peace in their families by intervening in this economic crisis periods to uplift poverty in their families.

Mbiti says Africa philosophy refers to the understanding attitude of the mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African people think and act or speak in different situation of life. Because traditional religious permeate all departments of life. There is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between religions and non-religions, between spiritual and material areas of life. He or she takes his religion where ever he goes to. So it means, the traditional African philosophy should not be altered by circumstances happening in the society. No changes should be made.

Mbiti says to belong to the whole community, means that, you have to be involved meaning, participation in the benefits of ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. That is why to accept women to be in meetings where men that are, is like going out of the norms of that society. Someone cannot detach himself from the religion of his group. Africans do not know how to exist without religion. He looks at some perspectives in relation to African religion which portrays those girls before becoming women are taught how to take care of their husband, bear children and how to prepare food and do other domestic affairs.

He asserts that in some Africa societies, the choice of marriage is made by parents and this may be done even before the children are born. This means that if in one household, there is a young boy; his parents go to another household where there is a young girl or where there is an expectant mother. They put in an application for the child to be born in the event that it is a girl. Sometimes these arrangements may be made before the children are born or they make marriage negotiations. When the girl is still very small. (Mbiti 1998:133).

It is inferred that women had been sidelined since even before they were born. The refusal not to take part and for them to feel cheated and inferior has been since through birth. Because decisions about their lives were being taken since. My research was to find out if women are now involved in conflict solving, despite the old traditions and religion that keeps them aside. That is why in Africa society which Cameroon is one of them, practice polygamy. To the men it raises their social status and is a sign of wealth. More children means power and more girls means to get them married for fortune (bride price) and Africa is a typical patriarchal society. Philosophical, it shows that the man is powerful with many wives meaning his control over them makes him strong thereby many labourers in his farms. The society of Africa is patriarchally strong. Because in most societies the men pay (bride price) to the wives parents and these wives are all under them and bear them children. This practice makes the women not having other options to take when crisis arise in their relationship. Thus making the divorce rate in Africa to be low, because much money is paid to the woman's family. (Mbiti 1998:143).

Baye Francis Menjo (2010) on *Africa journal on conflict Resolution* wrote mostly about international conflict resolutions between Cameroon and Nigeria. So this was based on the border crisis and the decision of The Hague by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). But Bakassi where the conflict is has a lot of social crisis and conflicts within the community itself. The villagers mostly women were victimized during the Bakassi crisis with the soldiers from Nigeria inside Cameroon. The impact and scare which they left to women, cannot be denied. Women could have played a role during that conflict amongst women themselves which men could not identify. The men complained of the women being raped during that period and, they cannot tell if the children born during that period were their children. (Baye 2010)

Okin postulates that are multiculturalism still bad for women? In her book she talked how women cannot know who they really are. Because they have been suppressed by their culture and their religion and their voices are not heard. The culture she says hinders the involvement of women to participate fully in the development of the community. (Okin 1998).

Lihamba.A (2003) in her essay *women peace and conflict resolution in Morogoro-Tanzania* says, women play some specific roles in the society to avoid or minimize conflicts which education is conducted formally and informally, meaning life was seen as a processing of education and learning. This begins from childhood which individuals are taught about the community's morality and the code of conducts. Thus the community initiate and initiation ceremony to the girls known as 'digubi' and 'dikumbi' for the boys. Girls were trained during this initiation on their duties and responsibilities as women. This is carried out in a period of 3months by the elderly women and the boys are sent to the bush to learn how to behave as responsible men. If the results of their training comes out poorly they are punished and the ones with a good results are given out are also celebrated by their families as pride to them. This entails the whole community participation for these youths to take part in their upbringing. Meanwhile a successful community member is seen as that individual who has all the positive aspects of the community, which means, he is honest and have patience and so on. So that when conflicts arise, they will be able to handle the conflicts in that community. Some conflicts after resolution, fines of goat,chickens,etc are levied on those concern with the case and the whole community partake of eating what is being paid as fines, which they all danced and sing together and forget about the conflict.(Lihamba 2003:121). She talks also that, the conflict between the Maasai and the Kaguru people also causes conflicts in the community and because of lack that is what makes others to fight over certain issues in the community. Women being the victims as well as children, suffer these consequences of the conflict. Women do not generally go to war but they stay indoors and wait to receive the men back from war. They take care of the children and the entire home, which is their role. If the conflict lies between the man and the woman at home, elder women go to the house of the married couple and bring peace by harmonizing those ones again.(Litamba 2003:120).

Appleby R.Scott (1996), *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: religion, violence and reconciliation*. His theory on conflict resolution entails to remove the extent of possible inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation, and /or advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict. These processes, when successful, result in cease-fire and peace accords designed to contain the conflict in lieu of(and, ideally in participation of) structural reform, efforts to address the root causes of the conflict and to develop long-term practices and institutions conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in the society. Thus religion actors participated in conflict transformation under their different sets of sociopolitical

circumstances, what is called the ‘‘crisis mode’’ and the ‘‘saturation mode’’ and the ‘‘intervention mode’’. Religious actors, as we will see were engaged most frequently in the crisis mode, where their impact was significant but short term. Appleby said in each mode, however, religious individuals and organizations collaborated effectively with government, nongovernmental and other religious actors, indeed ‘‘religious peace building’’ which is a misnomer leads one to believe that religious actors were able to transform dimensions of modern conflict by functioning independently of government and other secular and religious actors. Meanwhile the case study group for this research is being carried out by the Catholic Women Association in Cameroon Buea, which applies to what Appleby, is insinuating. The development of effective measures to prevent or contain deadly conflict begins with the articulation of the problems generating the conflict and it requires the mobilization of social forces desirous of addressing those problems. Religious figures have been exceptionally active in this arena, first as social critics calling government officials and political, military and business elites to account for unjust and abusive politics. See the case in the period of 1990, the political upheavals in Cameroon with the first multiparty ideology, there was chaos and people were dying, only the church could help to bring peace in periods like this, with prayers and face to face talks. The economic crisis too came up and Women had to stand to work and teach other women in Cameroon on how to generate money to help the family and assist the men. So to say religiously-inspired ‘‘prophecy’’ served as an early warning of rifts in society and of systemic human rights abuses that threatened to generate greater violence, that is why you see Cameroon is seen as peaceful, because of this warnings of rifts in society which can be instigated by the religious bodies.

This theory cited above can be in the case of an act of raising popular awareness of the cases of the conflict. in order to eliminate or ameliorate this conflict of religion, which can lead to confrontation that invariably will involve the use of lethal force by at least one side. It is better that violence should be avoided altogether in confrontation between an oppressive regime and a people seeking liberation. But nonviolent militants serving in prominent leadership roles in such struggles helped prevent the escalation of violence. An example can be the case when Aung San Suu Kyi the daughter of Burma’s famous and revered leader Aung San, who had led the country to national independence in 1947, emerged in 1988 as that nation’s most visible and influential champion of parliamentary democracy and basic human rights. The dictator resigned and there were hopes for the democrat. Millions of Burmese marched for peaceful interim government democrat civilian government. And there was restoration. So sometimes is

to create the culture of tolerance within communities and increase communication and understanding, mediate disputes and put in place other basic elements of conflict management. Take the case of the resistance of the men in Cameroon because of their culture, which prevents them not to accept women to be involved in conflict resolution meetings. Culture should not be a barrier for good ideas for peace building. Women sometimes, see things differently especially as mothers and models in the community. Though religion in the community has a double effect in that, it advances not only stability of the civic order but also the internal transformation of the religious community. Leadership in collaborative civic projects provides an influential forum for religious actors who are the nonviolent, tolerant and ‘militant’ face of tradition. With respect to the notion of religious/cultural attachés, diplomats and policy makers. According to Appleby women would be well served as specialists with an integrated view of religion and an expert knowledge of the complex moral heritage of one or more major religions in a conflict setting. Such specialists would know alternative subtractions within the religion and be prepared to collaborate with local religious actors.

One of the goals this theory assert is that of peace building which will be to persuade more churches, denominations and other religious organization to accept peace building as a calling and to endorse the training of their representatives in the skills of conflict resolution be it male or females in the religious group or churches. For the development of the society. (Appleby 2000:305).

3.1 Social Gatherings and Ceremonies

Ceremonial occasions are regarded as etiquettes of the Cameroonian society and Buea in particular. According to Bamlaku (2010), the ability of dispute settlement mechanisms in restoring harmony in a community is primarily to establish reconciliation between the contenders by creating an opportunity for friendship rather than bringing the guilty party to justice or reaching some other outcome. This is seen in the case of the community of Buea in Cameroon where the women are asked to stay quiet, when men are talking rather than bring harmony among the men and women, to see that, that should be inequality among the two parties. Thus making them to be friends, to build up that same society which triggers poverty, and bad governance which is for the men only which some rituals can be carried for this maintenance of peace. According to Turner (1969), rituals are aimed at maintaining social homogeneity or what is termed as ‘communitas’. When ruptured social relationships are repaired, it creates a sense of oneness among the disputants. There is only one agenda is to

communicate with God. Which a man and a woman are equals in the eyes of God. In laying role in conflict solving, equality is the word of the day to help peace to reign between the man and the woman.

The theory to restore justice (RJ), stipulates that conflicts and reconciliation often is to restore moral community on account of wrong doings. It states that perpetrator both from the victims he has injured and from the moral community he has disturbed by violating its publicly shared norms. Thus, the wrong doings has the capacity to destroy social structures in the community. Therefore the community expects its members to follow what is morally accepted by all, which wrong doing undermines both the victim and the community obligations. Therefore one is bound by some community moral values expected by the community in which one lives (Vietch. 2007).

Peace building is based on preventing the recurrence of the violent conflict. The assumption is that peace building is needed in order to avoid the occurrence of violent conflict. Hence; conflict does not necessarily need to be violent only in order to be avoided. Sometimes conflicts maybe positive, aimed at righting the wrongs. In addition to the concept of preventing violent conflicts, peace building could refer to the "full spectrum of intervention that is focused in restoring relations between groups that have been in conflict. Take the case of men and women in conflict because of gender issues or culture in Cameroon. In order words peace building may go hand in hand with conflict although peace building could also be solely positive. It is also important to maintain the resolutions by which social integration is promoted for the people forwarding peaceful resolution in conflicts. Thus the theory ties in line with what was seen in the field during research. Women who were interviewed said men following the African philosophy, use to shut them up when they are talking, but now, women have studied and raise up their educational level to be heard when they speak even when men are settling disputes. The points of views of the women are also taken into consideration when there is a peace talk. Women are no more hearers only in peace building in a community but contributors to make peace to reign in the community. (Chaiwandamira.2006:15).

By and large, the community building and restorative peace in this society helps to bring people together. The Catholic Diocese in the Buea parish, has a PEACE AND JUSTICE

COMMISSION which the women mostly used when the cases of victims and offenders is a little above them. This tool is used in order to build the society of our own no matter how much offences are committed. People need to reconcile with each other in order to avoid hostilities that can create more violence. Therefore a restorative justice brings negotiation, cooperation and gives room for mutual understanding and reconciliation which forgiveness comes in. Thus taking positive measures that will aim at building the community to continue to live together in a conducive environment.

3.2 Conclusion of the Theory.

Peace and conflict management has been a professional responsibility in the society that wants to have sustainable peace. Thus family ties and kinship relationship keeps the strength of the present day positive peace in the society. People recognize peace through family ties and family structures in the institutions like marriage which foster growth in the community and serve as a source of bearing new generation in the society. These aspects in life helps the community to grow especially when they learn to tolerate each other, negotiate in situation where there is misunderstanding which will further brings mutual understanding, reconciliation, forgiveness which finally are the virtues of a strong and lasting society for growth, peace and development. After which they look at violence as an enemy against development. Then the community puts in, strong habits to foster, grow as hospitality, loyalty for good character of social justice in the community. According to one author, nation states or groups, in a more cheated society would employ individual's means to bring violence to be heard or defined themselves. The argument is that conflict creates the opportunity to democratize by limiting state power or suppress the power of a dominant group to agree on how future matters will be settled, take the case of a Cameroonian woman that has suppressed for long to stay quiet even when she is hurt. Morton-Deutsch et al (2006).

Mbuagbo (2006) looked at how during economic crisis in Cameroon women tend to involve themselves in solving conflicts in their families; they helped through prayers and income generating projects. Which means being active in 'petit trading' to help maintain the lives of their families during that period. The case of conflicts is also that women too want to be identified as being useful not just housekeepers for house hold chores but useful citizens of the society. Today it is generally understood that the causes of violent conflict are more complex. In

general, there is some agreement that the root causes of conflict include poverty, economic dependence, weak states, and ethnic discrimination, international rivalries, and foreign interventions, likewise African philosophical ideas. Cameroon being one of the African deep rooted followers of the African culture and tradition, forbids women of many things of the postmodern society but it is progressive because most men have come into understanding to which women are in the society.

According to the conflict theory of Mbiti, Africans anywhere they are they move with their tradition and their culture. So they cannot live without their culture, according to him, women should be kept silent and follow what their culture says, as the Bible indicates that women should be silent and only ask questions too their husbands at home. With my own opinion, African man will like to quote such scriptures to dominate the women.

Okin also condemn this fact of African men carrying their culture and traditions and culture everywhere. In citing the cases of Malian who were residents in France where the men were allowed to marry many wives, the conflicts in their homes, is not a good sign for the French government and the community dwellers. The children will become delinquent because of the anger and frustration at home from their parents, as well as the wives.as they have caused hatred among themselves and their children. Polygamy is a culture with the Africans and women have lived with that for decades. That is why; you will find recommendations of the removal of some bad cultural practices in this research which should give rooms for social gatherings rather than having so many wives and children for pleasure. Social gatherings are some of the theories which are being applied in the community to maintain peace and resolve conflicts.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Data presentation and Findings

This chapter explains the socio-demographic characteristics of the informants through the use of oral interviews and personal observation in the field, it looks at the CWA in general, an overview of what I have done, the violence in the family, new development on how men bring cases to the association (CWA), how internal conflicts of the group (CWA) is solved and how it functioned in the local communities. The chapter also contains the presentation of the data collected in different themes. With the data collected during my field work. It is concluded that the CWA group has served as a good mechanism for peace building in the local community of Buea and its surroundings.

The number of respondents during my field work was 10 and I had one group interviews in one of the local branches. The female respondents were 9 and only one male who was the Reverend Father of the Buea diocese. The Reverend father was interviewed because the Catholic Women Association is under the diocese of Buea in the Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon. During interviews, alongside some comments from some men who came for their cases with some women were also taken into consideration. That means the words which they said during the trial of the cases, I also wrote it down but not directly as a response to what I had to ask the women in the CWA group who were involved in the trial of the case.

Data collected was based on the interviews of women who are experienced and have had cases similar to other women in the past. In the previous chapter, I discussed about how I gathered my data with members of the CWA, and the women, top the list of my interviews were women, just one man made up among the women, the Reverend Father of the Buea diocese.

According to the cases in my findings, it's clear that, conflicts can arise out of any social misunderstanding of both parties. Thus anger and strife can instigate conflict to begin in the community. Conflict too can arise when a girl refuses to marry someone which her parents have chosen for her. Notwithstanding the lack of communication to the girl. Again if a married woman refuses to have sex with the husband because her bride price has not been paid fully. This type of case, the husband looks for the head woman who is like a counselor to the CWA group and report the matter. Which she mediates on that, and cautions the man on where his

responsibility is supposed to be according to the tradition and custom of the said woman in the group. Traditions of each member in the CWA group differ, and so, the case too are unique based on that. No matter that the CWA is under the Catholic Mission, as a church, they follow the culture of the people in order to bring harmony in the community. (Bamlaku 2010).

The CWA is a social institution as well. According to the theory of structural functionalists, social institutions are functionally integrated to form a stable system, and a change in one institution will precipitate a change in other institutions. Societies are seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with their various parts working together to maintain and reproduce them. The various part of society is assumed to work in an unconscious and automatic fashion towards the maintenance of the overall social equilibrium. The society in Cameroon is structured also in different tribes and people speaking different languages. But there is one thing that binds them together, when they have the same religion. They are also traditionally organized indigenously where there is social organization where at the head, you have chief, and same applies to the CWA community where there is the head woman who is the adviser and counselor. The Head woman has power over situations that occur just as the chief in the community. She is considered as the peacemaker and mediator between the society and God because she is seen after the image of the mother of Jesus Christ. If there is any problem like the marital problem between families, she mediates for the victims, sometimes pray for them to God as that is their duty as women in that group to seek the face of God in difficult times full of challenges. She is considered having a special skills and experience. (Bamlaku 2010:99).

Furthermore, the system operates very strong when complains come from members of the group (CWA). Actions are being taken seriously, for example, if one of the members reports that her daughter has run away with another man of in the neighboring village or when the son brought in a girl that is from another village or a woman from another group of CWA who is from another village. Marriage relationship is a strong way to strengthen love and peace in any community as well as bringing serious conflicts within the community and outside the community. The attention to resolve conflict about it is taken with no rest of heart. Conflicts too in this society can also occur when a girl refuses to marry a man that the parents have chosen for her. That comes to the knowledge of the CWA and they try to solve it by calling the

father of the girl in concern to the meeting with woman after when the head woman has talked with him privately. The man is the head of the house, and the Cameroonian society is patriarchally organized, so the man is first consulted on issues like marriage of the girl. The head woman of the CWA tries to educate the man of the right of the girl child, though she also talks to the girl for her to respect the consent of the father, following the culture and tradition that binds the Cameroonian society and the friendship ties that keeps it firm. The view of the women based on the statistic from other men is that, the family violence has somehow dropped because most Thus some of the intense factors that also lead to conflict are the battering of women and the murder of a woman, and a verbal abuse of a woman by a man, even from another woman. This act is not taken lightly. Which when the norms are violated, it will be punished after hearings. Most importantly, cases which incur battering caused by the step son of the older wife, the punishment is done corporally, which means whips are given to the big son who had to beat up the step mother but most often, the women invite the men to do this for them. Sometimes, with the heart of a mother, they set a different punishment to boy. The practice of polygamy is a big fight following the rules of the social organization of the community in Cameroon and Buea municipality in particular.

Following the empirical findings and analysis, is evident that, the CWA, is not a legal court for cases but is where dispute and petty conflicts can be resolved, unless it is more than what is required of the group, that is when it can be taken to the courts in cases of divorce for example and murder. Conflicts are best resolved by discussion, in order to avoid direct violations because it is not cherished in the community as fighting is not tolerated by members of the community and the group. Sometimes conflict can also be resolved through debates and compromise, thus ruling out some of the conditions which can instead aggravate the situation than solving it. (Piwane 2011:79)

The CWA has been functioning in the Buea municipality for many years and people in the community has tended to trust it, which is why the association has expanded and have many branches in its locality. The CWA on the family violence is based on the fact that most members of the family are disciplined in regards to fear to scandal for them to be brought to the CWA court or hearings for crimes of violence in the family. More especially has been the youths, as they spoke with me in an interview about their mothers group (CWA). They agreed

to me, that, this group makes them to be seen as deviance in the society when they are taken there to an offence they have either committed to their partners or a senior person in the community. Furthermore the group has turn to accept men to bring issues concerning members of their family to be tried or being counseled if need be. Sometimes, extreme cases of criminal offences are sent to the customary courts nearby. It is very evident that, the branches of CWA hold cases of crimes, in their locality, except when the chief woman cannot handle a particular case that is sent to the head office of the CWA, which is Buea central in the municipality. Meanwhile the CWA themselves also have their internal quarrels among themselves and members in the group or other branch members. ‘This mechanism has been very operational, of late’, says an elder woman who has been a retired teacher in the CWA and an adviser to the group. She further explain to me, her personal life story how people come to her to report cases of their wives and senior girls in the family, just because she is in the CWA group and being an elderly woman too. The elderly woman was very strong in her discussion and holds a very high reputation in that community ,not only based on the fact that she was educated and has traveled out ,but based on the fact that she is in that group of women, who portrays the imagine of the mother of Jesus. In Cameroon, anything associated with the things of God people respect it, they have high believe system, which God is the central part of their life and worshipping anything in relation with God. Again women are seen as an integral part for peace in that society. But their voices are still to be heard loud as the pace of their role in decision making is progressive.

Notwithstanding another respondent said, women are on the progressive row of decision taking, but more forced needs to come from the women themselves to make sure they go to school. Another respondent talked about, other women to give inspirational openings to other women who are willing to be used and ready to go back to school. I asked her what she meant clearly, she said women, mostly the educated ones, do not give allowances for others who are not educated to be ready to face the challenge, she said, because most of the times, the women themselves always fight among others through jealous statements made to bring the uneducated women down or for them to feel so low. Her responds made me to find out more, from others. But I realized that, it was very shallow, and most respondents talked to me about women workshops and groups who hold seminars and make provisions for their adult school or education. Many sponsors have come from outside (international) and give opportunity for uneducated women to go back to school: Thus encourage them not to feel ashamed to study.

The other respondent said, one lady from abroad in a seminar told her, if she wants to still be the president she can be, if only she is willing to be empowered through education. She was so encourage with that statement and that pushed her to go to school and she can now read and write and is allowed to be the secretary in her traditional family meeting. This was a good one to note and the progressiveness of the educational level of the grassroots woman.

The head woman in the group, who is a retired teacher, I asked her what she thinks about women empowerment in Cameroon and Buea municipality and what is the impact in their participation in a conflict solving meeting? she answered and said, the same as the other respondents but in a logical way, saying the women have now realized, the only thing they have to do to be represented is to go back to school, and as the saying goes, ‘‘knowledge is power’’ which means to get power you have to be educated. Men she said have realized too that, only will they allow a woman to be exposed to certain things which they knew (men only) the society will still be backward. It is said that a society that educates a woman will educate the nation. This respondent said, it has been the men’s world, for a long time so the acceptance of women on the same decision table is taking a gradual process. African societies and Cameroon not left out, the culture is patriarchal and as such men are struggle in their own way,, to see how the notion of women staying at home can change the community. Mostly it will happen to men who must have traveled out of the country the respondent said.. The other respondents answered on the same question, by saying that, because the men have open up for them as compared to what the African philosophy has been, it shows that women are on the move in the aspect of peace processes. These signs make women to be happy and encouraged. Because now when issues occur in the family, men ask their opinions. And sometimes their ideas are taken and the conflicts are solved.

A question was asked why women are mostly silent in the meeting, there was an answer from one respondent who said, is because, the culture says so and if they violet this culture, they are seen as deviant in the society in which they live. Notwithstanding other women will rebuke you for disrespecting the men. The Religion practice demands women to stay quiet when the men are talking. The women are seen as having a lesser ideas when it comes to resolving conflicts and decision making. The traditions and the religion of that community do not permit men and women to be equals in terms of their Intelligent Quotient. Women are subject for life to the

authority of male guardians and they are excluded from political talks which normally are confined to men

4.2 Ready for the Field

Getting ready for the Field Work in Cameroon and to be ready was something that did not just take a day for me. I took a whole series of findings and investigations on what to do. I was in Cameroon during my summer holidays, went to the Catholic University get myself registered in the university and got a contact supervisor, who is the person of Professor Ndongko the PROVOST of the Catholic University in Buea. He accepted to be my contact person. I had to make contacts too with the head woman who is the head of the group (Catholic Women Association) in Buea central. It was still not easy for me to have her contact, because she was never in the office because of seminars and some training programs in other regions of Cameroon. Later after meeting her, she showed me some journals of what the women have been doing and minutes of the annual general meetings. From what I read in the minutes, I got an impression on how the Catholic Women Association (CWA) functions, which to me; it was a sign of approval and acceptance from her to work with the group.

4.3 Personal Reflections and Limitations.

The challenge of leaving Norway to Buea-Cameroon was a challenge to me because I was to receive a letter from the Catholic University of Buea to tell me they are ready and a space is available for me, because students were on Xmas break and the campus of the university too has changed. So there were renovation and building of some offices.

My personal interaction with the group of women on their meeting days was a challenge to me because the meeting was coinciding with some lectures in the university. So I decided to meet with the head women of the group, which was a challenge as well because, permission must come from my contact person in the university to her. A written permission was given to me by the PROVOST of the Catholic University before I could see the head woman in charge of the women of CWA. Most of my interviews are done in the evening when the women must have come back from the farm, as most of them are farmers. This gives me a long distance to trek on foot to go to where I was living. Accessibility of cars to my field of work.

4.4 Reliability/validity

To be reliable the data I collected from my field research, I used it. I had to put together all the responses of interviews conducted from different groups of my case study and different age group. It is very obvious similarities will be seen in certain issues of the data collected. This is because the tool is said to have tested and retested reliability if it yields the same results when they have the same samples at different times (Bryman 2011).

Though time can be another constraint but the sample availability of the respondents' variables can constrain the reliability. I used various tools to have the information, I needed. That is participant observation in the field, with an in-depth interview made me to understand how the women in Buea municipality function. This gave me the insight and of the people, the culture and some social aspects. While Validity was based on the information gathered, with theories and concepts adopted to support my thesis in order to fulfill the validity of my data. The literature reviews the books, journals and, articles in documentary were put together as secondary sources.

4.5 PRESENTATION OF THE INFORMATION

4.5.1 The Role of the Women Locally (branches of CWA).

In the field, I visited many branches say four different groups which only two were rightly interviewed with 10 respondents. That is the Seat of Wisdom and Queen of all Saints branch in the local villages. Those interviewed were willing and excited to talk because the case which was presented was the one of assault and the man who was brought up to be quest for assaulting the girl was remorse for doing that. The girl was beaten by this man until, she slept in the hospital, the women heard of it and went to the hospital to see if actually it ties with the rumours they heard. The said man was summoned to the women's council with the girl as the girl while in the hospital, asked for hearing as she came for report to the elder woman of the CWA. This head woman that is also elder sent the girl to the branch was the girl lives and the head woman in that branch handles the case to call for this man who assaulted the girl. Giving this opportunity for the case to be tried in the local branches, gives them power too. As those now in the local branches have power. The guy was questioned why the assault to the girl and he explained it was anger and that, the girl was abusing him and he got angry, started beating her

up mercilessly. A fine was given to the man to pay the hospital bills and to buy the turn clothes of the girl. The role of women locally is seen as that of peace building as they are mothers of children and, seen too as mothers to their husbands. And the community. Role of women in the community is for peace building and social development. A community' labour' and workshop, sometimes is being carried out during crisis like the case we just heard. The elderly woman organizes such. I was told as a symbol for regrets of some grievous acts.

The question if many people are using the group was unanimously answered as I had a group discussion with the women, they asked me to attend many cases where, the men used the group to solve their family matters. I was prepared to hear if only those who believe in God come to the CWA to report cases, I realized from the answers in the group that, trust has been a watch word in the group and this has given value and solidity for any case that is brought to the women's group. Women in the group before being members, go through scrutiny of their morals standards in the society. One respondent said to me, the groups have women who are elderly, so to the Cameroonian society age goes with wisdom. The head woman in that group, said, her being appointed as the head woman was based on her age, she is above 70 years and educated.

4.5.2 The function of CWA and who uses it

The CWA function and serves all people because men too regardless of the fact that they are not in the group of women, still come to report cases of their wives and relatives of the CWA. And in CWA, it is nonracial, tribe, language or ethnicity. People come with different issues, which can be complains, petitions and sometimes news from other branches of the group. In the CWA group officials of the customary court do visit and listen to cases or conflict solving meetings through the Peace and Justice Commission of the Diocese.

Women especially come to the CWA group for services based on their person issues like for training them for their income generating activities like how to make soap, how to rear fowls. Some even come for signatory and recommendation letters from the group. The head woman is responsible for counseling of the women on how to handle their homes, which she gives a

workshop on that. However concerning the community involvement, the women are allowed to hear cases and pass judgment to it from day to day.

Members in the community of all works of life come to the CWA for resolution after conflicts, as it is seen, that God is involve in the matter, one of the oppressed who does not want to forgive can be soften in the heart to forgive and let go, so that peace will reign, says the head woman of the chief woman of the groups. A follow up question came when I asked about; personal feelings working with any woman in the same office, because of the question which was raised that, women do not give allowances to other women. The respondent said, sometimes, it creates tension but later, it brings some relaxation if the person who is the boss, makes the junior employer who is the woman to feel free. Sometimes she said this tension is caused by the junior staff herself, based on that poor knowledge that women always fight among themselves. She said, the times are over that women, use to fight among themselves, this was because, very few woman were educated but now many have come up and are also holding high offices of decision making ,more than men, which does not create any space for threats for any woman. She said she can work in an office where a woman is with ease and effectiveness because she will be able to understand certain things she is going through than a man. The respondent also handed that she is looking forward to see that one day in Cameroon a woman she be the president and that, the intelligent quotient of the man and the women are the same and God created, male and female equally. Even in the eyes of the law, women and men are supposed to be the same, as human beings, and being educated the same, as the Universal declaration of the Human Rights states.

The conclusion she said was on the point “of fairness among the men and the government based on the culture”. She said “some bad cultural practices should be eliminated; women should come in a lamplight where they are able to pass laws to favour them and wipe out those laws that can hamper human beings”. Women she said should be in the parliaments and their points being taken, that is why, it starts from the local community then it reaches up to the top. If men in the grassroots start to look at women as equals, the generation of youths will follow. Then society will be a better place for all, there will be no abuse of another human being. And eventually peace will reign and lesser conflicts, and few times to sit for peace talks and there will be progress and development in the community in which we leave. Another thing in her

response was on how there should be government interventions aid the women in having adult education because in the past women have been behind because of that. Be able to give out opportunities and small loads to women and legal procedure's for establishing small businesses, support from NGOs about women and their awareness in gender equality and human rights. This respondent concluded that, women see poverty as a major cause of conflict within households, communities and even nations. Building peace means first and foremost the removal of obstacles to survival. The eradication of poverty should be an area of focus and women should be encouraged to participate fully in small entrepreneurship, and income generating activities. Also she said the national education system can endow youngsters with skills for peaceful conflict resolution and crisis management. Teaching these skills can be part of civic education. Just as issues of gender and democracy have become a priority in school syllable, issues of peace and conflict resolution should be also incorporated. Likewise revitalizing and appreciating stronger communities and institutions that have dealt with conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Another respondent added points in this domain saying, conflict prevention and management should be a focus here in Cameroon because, Cameroon, is very soon going to witness an international conflict, this was a forecast, because, all the surrounding countries have wars and Cameroon is a safe haven for them for refuge. Conflicts now are seen, from the individual, family, community and the society at large. In the level of communication, there can be peace promotion dialogues which can also be instituted. Women of all levels and ages could meet to discuss issues and design appropriate models for peace and conflict prevention, resolution. For this purpose, there is a need to enhance women's communication abilities. On the other hand, issues of peace and conflict resolution could be propagated through films, live performances and publication of stories. In all these, the role of women and the challenges of peace, which they face, could be highlighted. Thus teaching women in informal and formal education systems. The head of the women in the CWA, said, most teachers in the primary schools are women, her being a retired teacher for instance, and also she said many women teach in secondary schools. Which means women can fulfill a major peace task through their teaching and interaction with children. Equally important are women leaders to local levels whose skills and experience can be harnessed to promote peace. The other respondent middle age lady say 55 years of age, further talked and emphasized more on the question of women to promote peace and they are seen in the community as peace makers and peace builders. Thus, fair and better education for girls should take place in order to empower girls through education, policies that will enable more girls to attend and successfully complete secondary school should be put in place. Programs that will raise the self-esteem of

girls and to promote the culture of peace in the society. This means programs like “democracy program” which aims at empowering girls to articulate their concerns and problems and to seek solutions to obstacles that stand in the way of their social and academic aspirations. Encouragement she said, should be given to women in increasing and building women’s groups, because women and children are the most vulnerable groups when it comes to war, this groups will make women to know that any peace settlement establishment is for their advantage. Thereby bringing something new to the society as mediators.

It is very evident that, women when they are in their active group, well organized, they accomplish their motives for peace.” Take the case of our CWA group”. She said they are able to organize themselves, and know each person’s by name and try to define and address the conflicts systematically as they occur in the community. The head woman of CWA concluded that; The CWA because of its trust from the community, it has given birth to many branches all over, the environs of Buea and Cameroon as a whole and it is functioning effectively in bring women together and empowering them with activities in regards to their rights as human beings and model of the church of Jesus Christ. In this study the researcher examined the data, interpreted it by forming an impression.

4.5.3 Has Christianity made any difference towards the traditional Approach with the women?

The members in the community come to CWA for resolution of conflicts not only because there are women, but because they are seen as a symbol of respect for God. ‘‘Any case tried there, is seen as there was fairness in the case’’. Women always try to emulate this act of praying before they try to solve any problem that was tabled to them, says the head woman of the CWA central, Madam Salome. ‘‘ Meaning is a semi kind of church meeting before the agenda of any conflict to be resolved’’.’’ I myself am not Catholic had to go for prayers for 30 minutes before I attended the trial of a case’’ says one woman who was a witness to a case. Christianity has played a vital role in removing some of the ideologies of the traditional African belief system concerning the women. A majority of those in the community I realized were the Roman Catholics. That made it easier for knowing exactly the powerful role of the CWA as a symbol to the mother of Jesus being Mary. The community themselves can make evident of the fact that, the group (CWA) has settle down many differences which could have cost families a lot and the community at large says one respondent. AS long as the women themselves trust in God and pray, God will hear them and peace will come in the society.

4.5.4 Family Violence in the community

The number of families having conflicts in the community is very high. Many have abandoned their wives due to the fact that fact of poverty and economic crisis. The fees have children have increased. The work forces have changed, more technological things are used now that, at first. Men were hired to go and work in the cities but now. Their chances of going have reduced. This too makes them not to be able to take care of their children and wives. Consequently there is always quarrel in the family. The farms which use to produce good harvest is no longer producing, because the aids for fertilizers, is no longer there. Women now tend to be unfaithful and prostitution has covered most of their family talks, where everyone thinks they are right. No powers again from the husbands to control the family because they cannot provide for them. Young girls are going to the cities, being promised by one person to marry them, then later they realized the man is sending them to the streets to ask for money from men for sex. All these conflicts are seen in the villages now. Women stay out of the homes trying to go sell food stuff, and no longer have time to care for the children as before. They are looking for children school fees. Sometimes both of the parents go to the city in search of this greener pastures. Some go

overseas and the children are left on their own. This makes some of the children to be delinquent as no order is seen in the house by parents. Virtually conflicts and family crisis is seen and it affects the entire community. Children grow up not respecting elders any longer. Thus they are seen as armed robbers in the high way. Teenage pregnancies, young girls have babies and drop out of school consequently it becomes the burden of the society as all of these children are without direction. In the Third world countries and Cameroon included, there are no child welfare funds to take care of the children on the streets, says the head woman in the CWA. She said, the end result will be the children being delinquent and sometimes end up in 'Buster Institute in Buea' where the juveniles are kept for rehabilitation after they have been caught for a crime committed.

Meanwhile, men also cry for their women, not taking care of homes, looking only their personal needs, because of the situation that is in the house. Either they suspect the men of having so many women outside, or they think their men are not responsible enough. That makes them to disrespect them and refuse to have and fulfill their marital responsibilities by having sex with the man. The men feel assaulted in a way, though is not physical. Some of them come to the association of the woman (CWA) to report the problem to the head woman.

4.5.5 Age and functions

Figure 4.1; in the table below is very significant because age is considered as wisdom to the African society. So in this section, we have 4 elderly women who are 73 years old and 65 years old and 60 years old, the other 60 years old too. The 73 years old is a retired teacher who worked with the government and Adviser of the CWA group presently. She has a double function as the head woman of the group (adviser) and a counselor to the women of that group as well as in the Catholic University of Buea. And 3 who 45 years old and 2 who are 40 years old but just members in the group. The Reverend Father being interviewed was just to respect hierarchy because he is the one who reports about the day to day running of the women group in the diocese. Notwithstanding is very evident that power has been predominant in the hands of men who are not willing to share and extend the same status position privileged to the women. Thereby women are left as subordinate to the customary law and gender equality. Because of the patriarchal structure seen in Buea-Cameroon, this normally determine gender status on the basis of conception that do not afford all equal worth and respect, further more

women status of being leaders is that of being culturally socialized that women cannot be leaders. Radijeng 2004).

4.6 Interpretation of characteristics of informants/educational level

The respondents were habitants of Buea central and the neighboring villages surrounding Buea central. The groups who responded to the interviews were women of CWA working in the Catholic university and many were those in the villages I went to see how they hold their meetings in the villages they live. I was in a meeting with women in Bokova village which the women gathered in one groups and questions were being asked and unanimous answers to some of the questions.

The respondents on figure 4.1 show the socio demographic information which is the age group, female exclusively and the group types. Two groups of different people who responded on different days. I carried it out continuously for 3weeks of meetings which the meeting was taking place every Tuesday a week. The group was focus group and a total in the group who responded individually was 4 which are mostly the head women of the groups. The CWA groups of different branches were: the Seat of Wisdom and the Queen of all Saints group with 35 members per group. I examined these two particular groups in the different villages.

Table 4.1

4.6.1 The table below shows the summary of people interviewed

The group types of Seat of Wisdom CWA group branch and The Queen of all Saints is the same group under that umbrella of ¹⁴CWA. The MSc degree seen is one elderly woman who works in the Catholic University in Buea (¹⁵ CUIB), she is retired after working with the

¹⁴ The Catholic Women Association

¹⁵ Catholic University in Buea, which doubles as a seminary and an academic institution offering theology and career training to young and dynamic people in Cameroon as a whole.

government and her broad knowledge dealing with people, she was called again to work in the Catholic university in Buea and to serve as counselor and adviser of the CWA. Two women with Bachelor degree they were teachers in government owned schools but are fully members of the CWA. Then 3 primary school leavers who are house wives who are in the Queen of all Saints. Also 3 adult school housewives and an overall Reverend father in that Diocese of Buea.

But is evident that education is not the primary status that is seen in this group. What are seen are their level of commitment and the age of the women. Experiences count a lot in considering the high potentials of the group members. When dealing with cases and disputes one needs wisdom, experience and knowledge in the group. From the Seat of wisdom group in table 4.1 below shows that the level of education ranges from Bachelor's degree to the Master's degree, and the Queen of all Saints group educational level ranges from primary education and adult school education. And the single group being the Reverend Father with a Bachelor's degree. The total number of respondents is 10 from the two groups.

4.6.2 (TABLE 4.1) the table shows the summary of the people interviewed

Group types:	No. of respondents:	Age range:	Gender M/F:	Lever of education:	Occupation:
Seat of Wisdom	3	45-80	F3	MSc degree 1	Adviser
				BSc degree 2	Consultant
Queen of all Saints	6	35-65	F6	Primary sch.	Housewives
				3 Adult sch. 3	Housewives
Rev. father	1	25-68	M1	BSc theology	Rev. father

From the statistics seen, it can be said that, the enlightenment of women, has reached a lamp light as most of them responded with confidence of striving to know more and to be educated on a certain level if a chance is given to them. Men themselves accepted that women have always been good leaders especially in economy. Another pertinent issue is that women are to participate fully in the conflict solving meetings. This will enhance peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Poverty too has also been another point to take into consideration to promote women to fully participate in peace building and conflict solving. Thus the issue of lack of resources to be carried out by women to perform certain actions. This also means them having back their rights which were taken away from them. The rights of not going to school because

they were female children. The women being the primary victims, thus the inclusion of gender perspectives into conflict analyses can be beneficial not only to ensure better understanding of conflict dynamics, but also to highlight the linkages with development and poverty issues. So most of the statistics was based on gender equality and opportunity for females to speak than males.

Majority of the respondents were females. The CWA group has just one male being the Reverend Father who is like an overseer to the women according to the Catholic Mission's structure. The gender disparity shows that the group has specificities. Based on the nature of my findings of my research topic.

4.7.1 Examples of Cases tried by the CWA

CASE No: 1. (assault of a girl by taxi man.)

There was a conflict between a taxi man and a girl which was on non-negotiation of taxi fare. And the taxi man had to beat up the girl several and her dresses were tore by the taxi man and that was a disgrace to woman hood as the women agitated. So that act was seen by other women and they took it to the council of men for the assault. The victim and the assault were both present in the judgment seat and the hearings was objectively solved. And the women were satisfied because their points of views were taken into consideration and some of the women, I observed were in the same status with the men when the hearings were taking place. Generally conflicts are always being solved in the local council of elders of men, but now it is mixed as the case was concerning a woman. That did not end there because the traditional council had to send this particular case to the customary court, even though it is also carried out following legal issues based on the tradition and culture of the people, the summoned here in the court is like a high court of the community in which the situation of the conflict occurred.

CASE No: 2. (marital issues, husband and wife)

The second case was the case between a husband and the wife. Where the woman is a member of the Catholic Women Association (CWA). The husband had to come to the head woman of the CWA to report the wife, for lacking in her domestic responsibilities and not having respect to the husband. It is said that, she always allows the children on their own in the house and house chores not done, on the pretext of going always to the CWA meeting. The husband said, even for the woman to perform her marital responsibilities like having sex with him, she will give conditions for the act to be carried out. When the women spoke, she said her husband, was

not caring for her but taking care of other concubines of the husband whom she discovered and she became rebellious to the husband.

There is always a means of solving sensitive issues like this one heard, because only elderly women, were asked to give decisions based on this hearing, and the conclusion was that, the woman is supposed to respect the man and perform her marital duties or she loses her chance of being a leader in the CWA in the sub group she was leading. She was term her to be a role model in the group. It was just a coincidence that, she was a leader, but I wondered if she was not. The man was given a fine of reporting to the CWA each month with list of things carried out in the family as things of care and necessities. This he will do for 6 months and the women investigate to know it was carried out and they are satisfied. Then he will progressively do it as fulfilling his normal duty in his family. The judgment in any case or conflict is respected and taken worthy. Since in the diocese they have created, THE JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION, which deals with the customary court as well as for the furtherance of the cases which are not taken seriously.

CASE No: 3 (quarrels and fights)

A quarrel between 2 women of the CWA but of different branches. The quarrel sparked up because one of them claimed the words which Sister A spoke to Sister B was very vulgar. And sister A, abused B concerning the womanhood telling her she smells so badly. And it resulted even to a fight because sister B felt hurt as she was being abused by in the public. Sister B had to summon sister A to the CWA council of peace and justice. Both of them after hearing was found guilty because, Sister B was not supposed to hold her to fight, instead she could have come to report her, even though she used abusive words on her. The fine for sister B was not as heavy as that of Sister 'A' who started the whole scenario of vulgar words to Sister B.

According to African tradition, the women find it an offense if another woman abuses the other to her womanhood. 'A' payment of 5 bags of salt was to be paid by sister A with ¹⁶30.000 FRS to be put in the women 'trouble fund' and sister B to pay one 20 liters of ¹⁷'palm oil'. This will be shared to all the women.

¹⁶ Equivalent or exchange of 400 Norwegian kroner, value or currency attached to the French Franc

¹⁷ Cooking oil being crushed from palm-nuts, fruits from the palm tree.

From the case presented above, is evident that the CWA group is used on different matters of the community. Be it with the men or the women, boys or girls. The surrounding of Buea serves its locality with the aim of fostering peace to Buea municipality and its environs. Cases and hearings are open for people to participate, even though, they are women and the cases here entails no money to be paid when it has to be tried. The community too is socially tied to each other which is because they are neighbors or relative which may be difficult for those who has been wronged to shy away from solving the conflicts but to bring peace. As it is said, there is community solidarity which everyone turns to care and share everyone's problems and challenges. As it is said in the "Bakweri land" every child is for everyone in the community.

4.8 Reconciliation and conflict solving at the CWA

Conflict resolution refers to a political process through which the parties in conflict eliminate the perceived incompatibility between their goals and interests and establish a new situation of perceived compatibility. It usually ends with an agreement, negotiated by the representatives of the two opposing groups, that outlines the details of the settlement in such a way as to allow the negotiators to view their respective goals as not being contradictory. Conflict resolution can also be seen as a psychological process, because it requires that the negotiators will change their beliefs regarding their own goals, the other group's goals, the extent of contradiction between these two sets of goals, the conditions of the political environment, the situation of their own group, the situation of the adversary group, or combinations of any or all of these beliefs. In the context of intractable conflict, it is assumed that formal conflict resolution is only a necessary phase on the rocky road of peacemaking. Of special importance is the process of reconciliation through which the parties in conflict form new relations of peaceful coexistence based on mutual trust and acceptance, cooperation, and consideration of each other's needs. This is when the peace process becomes sustainable – thus the concept of sustainable conflict resolution. (Deutsch, 1973; Fisher, 1990; Kriesberg, 1992,).

Furthermore reconciliation comes with healing, forgiveness; restoration. It is all true that forgiveness is associated with Christianity of the people, which is God's forgiveness to the world. Thus this act of forgiveness is for both the victim and the perpetrator, which the perpetrators admit his/her, wrongs and then ask for forgiveness from the victim. The CWA takes all cases with seriousness, so they accept the community to be involved because, any

minor conflict can grow to be a major one and will affect the entire community if care is not taken. Just as a minor case of silence for not greeting each other might aggravate to other things, so it is treated and killed at the initial level. The settlement too in CWA group of any conflict is not forced to people. Which means it is opened and the matters treated by both parties. No mediators to speak like in the law court where you have lawyers. Any mediation needs people with wisdom and it should be elders in the group where the case is summoned.

4.9 Restitution and Restoration of morals in the community.

In fostering community building, the local community needs restitution and restoration. Restitution is the act of restoring to the rightful owner something that has been taken away, lost or surrendered. Secondly it is an act of making a compensation for a loss or damage. And restoration is an act of being restored to a former place. Also is the giving back of something lost or stolen. The better term is to give back things to the rightful owner and repay good to the wrongs done.

Hence these wrongs can be psychological, physical harm to the offended. This means an appropriate method has to be found in order to suit the offense. However it will be harmful for an offense of psychological, physical harm, though all cases are being treated in CWA. They help the cases of community, no matter how heavy or light the case may be.. For instance ,a case leading to a broken home of a woman in court, this kind of cases goes but to the court but some people in the community can take it to the CWA group first to get some advice to do and right channel to take and in some cases save the marriage. Another situation which cases come to the CWA can be some petty or minor cases which cannot be understood by the civil law court. For example, witchcrafts cases, petty theft, some immorality of deviant behaviours. People, which have gone with their cases to the CWA council unit, are satisfied with how the case was handled with their women. The result of peace with was taken and the resolutions of their problems, made them to have good notion about the CWA proceedings. This is because, the cases are being held face to face and in close doors where, they are not frightened on who is to handle the judgments or pass judgment.

4.10 Ensuring the Welfare of Children who stay when their parents migrate

Children being the primary concern in every society. The women's role in care taking for children is also a concern in the society. The nature of consequences of separation for children and adolescents depends on the individual social-economic context and family circumstances. The case of my interviews with women in the village of Bokova in the Buea municipality was one of misery to the youngsters. A woman said, Most of the times, the husband leave home to go look for jobs in the city and later she realized the man comes back telling her of not enough money. Not knowing that, he has had some other relationships back where he went in the city. She gets angry go in search of money in the city as well. The welfare of her children she said is in the hands of God because they need to eat. A respondent which is the head woman of the CWA branch in Bokova, she said most of her members have migrated to the city in search of money because of the economic crisis and that, complains come to her most often about the kids that has just been left on their own. Sometimes is the husband who will be at home to care for the children and the wife leaves to the city. But sometimes too is the men, but the women still complain that the men rarely come quickly to help them out. The consequences will lie in families where the adolescent is a girl, which she will be loose from the family grip and she starts to go dating men not of her age in order to have money to eat. Finally she will be pregnant and drop out from school. This brings stigma to the family and the community in which they are.

4.11 Critique of the CWA Council

CWA was seen as group of women who come together to pray for each other and their community. It was not seen as a platform for judgment of cases or conflicts. But recently because of the value and intervention of certain issues from outsider in the group and group members. They started seeing it as a forum to settle disputes and conflicts in the community and the group members. Meanwhile the issue of women trying to handle cases, has been another critique and, other people see it as being biased when cases come to the women because they think, is seen in the point of view of women. Some who also think they are non-Christians find it hard to come to hear what is being said because it is done around the church premises. Furthermore some people think the kind of fines which are labeled to offences does is not very strong as in the court following the crime committed. Where a woman will have to

beat up a fellow woman mercilessly which she went to the hospital and just some liters of palm oil is asked for her to pay. The women always think they do it as God will forgive each other and not labeled pain again on the issue. But that is being highly criticized by people in the community.

4.11.1 The Role of women in promoting conflict and searching for peace

Women play double roles before conflict, during conflict and after conflict. They have special skills in instigating conflicts as well as stabilizing conflict and again look for peace. Before the conflict women will look at men as being strong as they are from war and see them as bringing successes and peace in the community. During the conflict they promote war by encouraging those in the war front by cooking them food. Furthermore women play an important role in stabilizing peace and searching for peace too. Because women are mostly the victims and children. Cameroonian society is polygamous, the elder woman, tries to bring mutual understanding among the other mates (wives) especially within the children of all the mothers and between the husband and his other wives. Women have special skills to settle conflicts, one is because they are seen as mothers and secondly as a wife and thirdly as mother of children. Women constitute a symbol of peace in the Bakweri culture in Buea. They can persuade their husbands in cases where they want to take a harsh decision that will harm the family and community at large. After any conflict between two families in the villages, the single women can visit the families especially where the case was between young men in that family for peace to reign. Even though women are not allowed to participate in conflict solving but they still device a means to see how they can contribute to the peace building of the community. Take the case of how CWA has been used by women as a tool to bring peace in their own community. Thus that makes the role of the head woman in that group so vital in the community. The head woman, who is also an adviser in the group, carries out mediation during the jury of a case. Take the case of family crisis; definitely the resolution will be carried out by a mediator who sits them for hearing before taking them to the whole group of the CWA. Take case No:2 where the man and the woman have their marital responsibilities to fulfill and they did not do that. This involves children and some other relatives, so there should be a mediator and some talks first. Sometimes the men fell so embarrassed to talk certain things in front of some other women, such cases are being handled by a mediator, who looks at the case first before bringing it to the hearings of other women,. This can just be in the final judgment of it where fines are labeled between the husband and the wife. However in some cases, the CWA

members also get involved in managing conflicts of such nature depending on the circumstances of it. Sometimes most of them are witnesses to what has happened between the husband children and the wife. But is very obvious that, in this group, no one is seen as a legal advocate of cases being carried out.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter give the analysis of the data collected in the field, the relation of the theory with the working groups in the field(CWA) and some of the theories which is being applied in the field with the data collected (restorative theory) and the group(CWA) in relation with the theory of the community building for peace.

5.1 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis in this chapter is based data being collected during my field work in four villages in the Buea municipality and the views of one parish priest and one professor in the Catholic University in Buea. The chapter discusses the ideas of the women and their significance in the role of conflict solving in the milieu of men and other members of the community in which they live. With the conceptual theory approach in chapter three, I had to relate the theory with the data collected. This is to see whether the theory helped in providing solutions in why women are to be involved in conflict solving issues and also to discuss the significance in conflict resolutions. All these is based on the data which I gathered in field and supplemented by secondary sources in archives about women and their role in the community. Also samples of the cases tried during my hearings in the group. And the relation of the theory with the case study (CWA group).

Better still; the most common analysis of qualitative data was observer impression. In this study the researcher examined the data, interpreted it by forming an impression. The data analysis methods employed in this study varied with the type of data. Considering that, both primary and secondary data was collected for this study, the objective of the researcher was to produce the data in a format that can easily be analyzed. This format included transcripts from interviews or extended interviews, a series of written answers on open-ended questionnaires, or field notes or memos. The memos and notes were developed as soon as the researcher began collecting data. These helped focus the researcher's mind and alerted him to significant points, which came from the data. These memos and notes were analyzed along with the transcripts or questionnaires. The qualitative nature of the research implied that data analysis was an on-going process, taking place throughout the data collection process. The researcher also took into consideration the emerging themes, adapting and changing the methods as required. A

comparative analysis method was employed especially in relation to the other conflict resolution methods adopted in other African countries. Using this method, data from different people and sources was compared and contrast to make sure no new issues came up.

Another analytical method that was employed in this research was discourse analysis. This method examined the patterns of speech, such as how people talked about a specific subject under discussion, the metaphors they use, and how they take turns in conversation. This analysis was used to interpret speech as a performance, which indicated an action rather than described a specific state of affairs or specific state of mind. Much of this analysis was intuitive and reflective, but it also involved some form of counting, such as counting instances of turn taking and their influence on the conversation and the way in which people spoke to others. This method was more appropriate in the focus group discussions. As in the same group, there were different branches of the same group of the Catholic Women Association.

Concerning violence in the family, new development on how men bring cases to the association (CWA) (Male involvement, how internal conflicts of the group(CWA) is solved and how it functioned in the local communities in Buea and Cameroon. With the data collected during my field work. It is concluded that the CWA group has served and a good mechanism for peace building in the local community of Buea and its surroundings. The CWA has been functioning in the Buea municipality for many years and people in the community have tended to trust it, which is why the association has expanded and have many branches in its locality. The CWA has made families to be well disciplined in the domain of family violence, in the sense that, most members of the family are careful in regards to fear of scandal for them to be brought to the CWA for crimes of violence in the family. The group most affected with this fear to be brought to the CWA has been the youths, as they spoke with me in an interview about their mothers group (CWA). They agreed to me, that, this group makes them to be seen as deviance in the society when they are taken there as offence to either their partners or a senior person in their community. Thus the group has turn to accept men to bring issues concerning members of their family to be tried or being counseled if need be. Sometimes, extreme cases of criminal offences are sent to the customary courts nearby. It is very evident that, the branches of CWA hold cases of crimes, in their locality, except when the chief woman cannot handle a particular case that is sent to the head office of the CWA, which is Buea central in the municipality.

Meanwhile the CWA themselves also have their internal quarrels among themselves and members in the group or other branch members. "This mechanism has been very operational,

of late'', says an elder woman who has been a retired teacher in the CWA and an adviser to the group. She further explain to me, her personal life story how people come to her to report cases of their wives and senior girls in the family, just because she is in the CWA group and being an elderly woman too. The elderly woman was very strong in her discussion and holds a very high reputation in that community ,not only based on the fact that she was educated and has traveled out ,but based on the fact that she is in that group of women, who portrays the image of the mother of Jesus. In Cameroon, anything associated with the things of God people respect it, they have high believe system, which God is the central part of their life and worshipping anything in relation with God. Again women are seen as an integral part for peace in that society. But their voices are still to be heard loud as the pace of their role in decision making is progressive.

Notwithstanding another interviewee said, women are on the progressive row of decision taking, but more force is needed from the women themselves to make sure they go to school. Another respondent talked about, other women to give inspirational openings to other women who are willing to be used and ready to go back to school. I asked her what she meant clearly, she said women, mostly the educated ones, do not give allowances for others who are not educated to be ready to face the challenge, she said, because most of the times, the women themselves always fight among other women, through jealous statements made to bring the uneducated women down or for them to feel so low. Her response made me to find out more, from others. But I realized that, it was very shallow, and most respondents talked to me about women workshops and groups which women held seminars and make provisions for their adult school or education. Many sponsors have come from outside (international) and give opportunity for uneducated women to go back to school: Thus encourage them not to feel ashamed to study again in the latter age. The other respondent said, one lady from abroad in a seminar told her, if she wants to still be the president she can be, if only she is willing to be empowered through education. She was so encourage with that statement and that pushed her to go to school and she can now read and write and is allowed to be the secretary in her traditional family meeting. This was a good one to note and the progressiveness of the educational level of the grassroots woman.

The head woman in the group, who is a retired teacher, I asked her what she thinks about women empowerment in Cameroon and Buea municipality and what is the impact in their participation in a conflict solving meeting?, she answered and said, the same as the other

respondents but in a logical way, saying the women have now realized, the only thing they have to do to be represented is to go back to school, and as the saying goes, ‘‘knowledge is power’’ which means to get power you have to be educated. Men she said have realized too that, will they have to allow women to be exposed to certain things which they knew (men only) the society will still be backward. It is said that a society that educates a woman will educate the nation. Coming to realized that the men have gone a long way, to see how they can change the ideology of other men in the community concerning women and their development in peace building has been very inspiring one respondent says. Mostly it will happen to men who must have traveled out of the country. But now even men in the local community do agree that, to educate the women, it brings development and peace in the society. The other respondents answered on the same question, by saying that, because the men have open up for them as compared to what the African philosophy has been, it shows that women are on the move. Women sometimes are happy, when men ask their opinions on many issues happening around them, especially in difficult and challenging situations in the family and sometimes issues that has been brought for them to solve.

The question if many people are using the group was unanimously answered as I had a group discussion with the women, they asked me to attend many cases where, the men used the group to solve their family matters. I was prepared to hear if only those who believe in God come to the CWA to report cases, I realized from the answers in the group that, trust has been a watch word in the group and this has given value and solidity for any case that is brought to the women’s group. Women in the group before being members, go through scrutiny of their morals standards in the society. One respondent said to me, the groups have women who are elderly, so to the Cameroonian society age goes with wisdom. The head woman in that group, said, her being appointed as the head woman was based on her age, she is above 70 years and educated and has traveled out of the country too.

5.2 The Relation of the theory with the Working Group; (CWA) and their role and impact in conflict solving in the community.

According to Chaiwandamira in her book on Perspective of Africa Governance, she says, it is fundamental in conflict resolutions to maintain ways by which social integration is to be promoted for people forwarding peaceful resolutions in conflicts. The goal of social integration is to create a more stable, just society for all, this every individual with rights and

responsibilities has a role to play, women not left out. As such peace building involves a number of different aspects, which may include forgiveness, cooperation, negotiation, facilitation creation of mutual understanding as well as reconciliation. Such an inclusion of women to play their role in the society must be based in the principle of embracing and not forcing, but a diverse participatory process that involves all stakeholders, women, men in the decision-taking that affects their lives. It is important to understand that social integration is not an end state that societies can achieve but a dynamic process in which societies engage in order and adjusts to accommodate different elements and through such adaptation, it maintains its inner cohesion. This theory is gradually being applied in the society nowadays because, the women integration in peace processes is taking some grounds according to what I found in the field, among the women in the Buea municipality and their role in peace solving. (Chaiwandamira 2006).

It is realized that, CWA in Buea municipality has played a vital role in the integration of women in the conflict solving bench of the women. The Catholic women Association has helped enhance the recognition of women in the Buea municipality and Cameroon culture and lifestyle as post modernity has been seen as one of the variables which have made it easier. Peace building is based on the fact of preventing the recurrence of violent conflicts. The assumption is that peace building is needed in order to avoid the occurrence of violence. In the real sense, conflict does not necessarily need to be violent, sometimes conflicts are positive and aimed at putting the wrongs right. Furthermore the concept of preventing violent conflicts will mean peace building to be a full spectrum of intervention that is focused in restoring relation between groups that have been in conflict. Thus peace building will go together with conflict although peace building could also be solely positive. This is also aimed at restorative justice (RJ).

Thus we look at the community in relation to the theory of the community building. The term community is said to be 'elastic', therefore it is often defined by its characteristics which could be the focus on harmonious type of bonds between people, geographical areas or group of people living in a particular place or community as an area of common life. Community is territorial; which the people are seen as having common things together which is shared geographically. In another way, people share common interest other than the place. They are

linked together by other factors such as religious belief, sexual orientation, occupation or ethnic origin. This is seen in the example of the Catholic Women Association with their members coming from different cultural background but backed up by their religious beliefs and, same sex attributes. He supports that development as sociologists call, is identity and selfhood which has played an important role. In that Identity and selfhood play an integral part in defining groups or communities and these have been seen as the key features in contemporary life. Communities have certain common characteristics which they identify themselves with in order to belong to a certain group. The other categories of community are those who are attached to a place, group or idea and those who have the spirit of community. This entails a profound meaning, not just with other people, but also with God and creation. (Hoggett 1997)

Mbiti argues on the other hand by saying, women integration into peace building and conflict solving will mean, trying to make the African culture to die out. Because a woman is supposed to be quiet and listen to the men. An African man as Mbiti says is identified with his culture and his religion, so to be prestigious and be of value, these cultural values moves with him wherever he goes. Meanwhile Okin cries out with the fact that women have suffered for a very long time because of this cultural values which is being 'moved-with' as she cited the case of the Malian men in France who thought it was good for them to have up to 4 wives. The government of France had to endorse that culture which was being carried from Africa, and that brought conflict among the women and children and these consequently a big family conflict. Thus eventually will affect the community in which these children are. In one of my findings, a respondent talked about, children from such family conflicts become delinquent, some run out of home and the females are found on the street doing prostitution. To help women build their self-esteem and be involved in peace building, some of this cultures need to be wiped out and not being carried from one society to the next. In the same vein Heiene in his theory of 'the oppressed and the oppressors' story', here if women who are seen as victims of conflict more often, are to be listened to, or they take part in hearing some of the stories of their oppressors, It will be of healing to them. So involving women to take part in solving conflict, it makes them release some and heal some inner wounds which have been in them for years. (Heiene 2011).

The theory on how women are seen as mothers and women are very compassionate as Oduyoye will say in her writings, is being supported by Ntahobari who says a Burundian woman is seen as a role model in the Burundian society. She is seen as a peace maker within two families. And

caretaker of the home and educationist of the family. With this role the women brings harmony in the society, when she is involved in peace settlement, she is highly respected and her points of view taken in that meeting because her husband sees her as an adviser.

Oduyoye looks at women role very important in the theory of religion, as she had a case of the South African women during their intervention in peaceful marching of the race issues. Better still the women, use to even cook food for those at the war, notwithstanding, asking the men to stay away from wars. The tradition too in Africa has involved women to be involved in church as activist. This tradition has helped women to be involved in bringing peace in communities as religion is a big tool used to bring peace in Africa.

5.2.1 The restorative theory of forgiveness with the CWA

Members in the community of all works of life come to the CWA for resolution after any conflict because they see it as a symbol of unity in the house of God. This is a symbol because if one of the oppressed who does not want to forgive can have a “soft heart” to forgive and let go, so that peace will reign, says the head woman of the group. A follow up question came when I asked about; personal feelings working with any woman in the same office, because of the question which was raised that, women do not give allowances to other women. The respondent said, sometimes, it creates tension but later, it brings some relaxation if the person who is the boss, makes the junior employer who is the woman to feel free. Sometimes she said this tension is caused by the junior staff herself, based on that poor knowledge that women always fight among themselves. She said, the times are over that women, use to fight among themselves, this was because, very few woman were educated but now many have come up and are also holding high offices of decision making ,more than men, which does not create any space for threats for any woman. She said she can work in an office where a woman is with ease and effectiveness because she will be able to understand certain things she is going through than a man. The respondent also handed that she is looking forward to see that one day in Cameroon a woman she be the president and that, the intelligent quotient of the man and the women are the same and God created, male and female equally. Even in the eyes of the law, women and men are supposed to be the same, as human beings, and being educated the same, as the Universal declaration of the Human Rights states.

5.2.2 The CWA in relation to the theory of community building

She concluded her interview with this point of fairness among the men and the government based on the culture, she said some bad cultural practices should be eliminated; women should come in a lamplight where they are able to pass laws to favour them and wipe out those laws that can hamper human beings. Women she said should be in the parliaments and their points being taken, that is why, it starts from the local community then it reaches up to the top. If men in the grassroots start to look at women as equals, the generation of youths will follow. Then society will be a better place for all, there will be no abuse of another human being. And eventually peace will reign and lesser conflicts, and few times to sit for peace talks and there will be progress and development in the community in which we leave. Another thing in her response was on how there should be government interventions aid the women in having adult education because in the past women have been behind because of that. Be able to give out opportunities and small loads to women and legal procedures for establishing small businesses, support from NGOs about women and their awareness in gender equality and human rights. This respondent concluded that, women see poverty as a major cause of conflict within households, communities and even nations. Building peace means first and foremost the removal of obstacles to survival. The eradication of poverty should be an area of focus and women should be encouraged to participate fully in small entrepreneurship, and income generating activities. Also she said the national education system can endow youngsters with skills for peaceful conflict resolution and crisis management. Teaching these skills can be part of civic education. Just as issues of gender and democracy have become a priority in school syllable, issues of peace and conflict resolution should be also incorporated.

Likewise revitalizing and appreciating stronger communities and institutions that have dealt with conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Another respondent added points in this domain saying, conflict prevention and management should be a focus here in Cameroon because, Cameroon, is very soon going to witness an international conflict, this was a forecast, because, all the surrounding countries have wars and Cameroon is a safe haven for them for refuge. Conflicts now are seen, from the individual, family, community and the society at large. In the level of communication, there can be peace promotion dialogues which can also be instituted. Women of all levels and ages could meet to discuss issues and design appropriate models for peace and conflict prevention, resolution. For this purpose, there is a need to enhance women's communication abilities. On the other hand, issues of peace and conflict

resolution could be propagated through films, live performances and publication of stories. In all these, the role of women and the challenges of peace, which they face, could be highlighted. Thus teaching women in informal and formal educational systems. The head of the women in the CWA, said, most teachers in the primary schools are women, her being a retired teacher for instance, and also she said many women teach in secondary schools. Which means women can fulfill a major peace task through their teaching and interaction with children. Equally important are women leaders to local levels whose skills and experience can be harnessed to promote peace. The other respondent middle age lady say 55 years of age, further talked and emphasized more on the question of women to promote peace and they are seen in the community as peace makers and peace builders. Thus, fair and better education for girls should take place in order to empower girls through education, policies that will enable more girls to attend and successfully complete secondary school should be put in place. Programs that will raise the self-esteem of girls and to promote the culture of peace in the society. This means programs like "democracy program" which aims at empowering girls to articulate their concerns and problems and to seek solutions to obstacles that stand in the way of their social and academic aspirations. Encouragement she said, should be given to women in increasing and building women's groups, because women and children are the most vulnerable groups when it comes to war, this groups will make women to know that any peace settlement establishment is for their advantage. It is very evident that, women when they are in their active group, well organized, they accomplish their motives for peace." Take the case of our CWA group". She said they are able to organize themselves, and know each person's by name and try to define and address the conflicts systematically as they occur in the community.

The head woman of CWA concluded that; The CWA because of its trust from the community, it has given birth to many branches all over, the environs of Buea and Cameroon as a whole and it is functioning effectively in bring women together and empowering them with activities in regards to their rights as human beings and model of the church of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the respondents said that, " women participation in the peace process is sustainable" because, women are seen as mothers in cases resolving conflicts and bring peace among two parties. Thought she said mediation is a very sensitive thing to do in the society because one party might think you do not like him or her. That is why the mediator should be a good listener and have patience, which it is said that most men do not have patience and are not good listeners. Again, to bring balance in every conflict solving or peace building, men and women should all be involved and engaged to speak because both men and women will bring

something different to solve and build peace. Any mediator for peace or a cease fire of any kind is trusted based on the fact that women are mothers. The respondent said. She further said, being seen as mothers and therefore being trusted for any settlement of disputes, means, they can rebuke, guide and correct either side of the conflict, where there will be a balance and peace will reign. ‘‘Suitable peace will be unless we the women work with the men and convince them’’, that brings partnership with the men and women to agree on certain matters hindering the peace in the society; she says. There will be blockage of any story of conflict and it will be one sided if both men and women are not involved in the decision table. Therefore we build partnership in conflict resolution with men and women in collaboration. This should be the theory of community building and integration. Which helps in development and selfhood which plays an integral in defining groups or communities? Communities have common features and common goals. Whether you are a man or woman, the community needs peace for it’s to grow healthily. And will that, the community provides social bond which is based on shared expectations between the members of that group or community. For example the believe system, customs, etc. In all it means the community have something in common which distinguish them different from other members of other community. This applies to the women of CWA in the Buea municipality. In their confines, they identify themselves with these defined features of their members and integrate themselves with the men into understanding of such. (Hoggett 1997)

Following the study of women and their role in conflict solving, I realized from the case studied that. Women have hindrances that constrain their competence in regards of their role in peace building and conflict solving. For example they are not given rights to have loans without their husband to guarantee the payments, culture and traditional barriers in a community, not all are educated in that domain which they are the victims etc. The Cameroonian woman in the society is seen as not competent enough to deal with conflicts and the maintenance of peace. The social setting undermines the capacity of women to play an important role in peace processes. Thus Women are still marginalized in the decision processes. Notwithstanding, the traditional systems which have disappeared in some areas of the society, like respect for women having the looks as mothers and respect for elders and the society is on patrilineal setting and religious beliefs. So the participation of women has not been allowed because of patriarchal and religious norms of the society. Instead of expanding the opportunities where women can play important roles, women space has been narrow due to these traditions, thus it does not provide women with the capacity or potentials to play a major role in conflict

resolution at the local level as well as the national level effectively and in a holistic point of view.

The Cameroonian women are dominated by the men, not only because of the culture but because of the women's incapacity in their educational background. Women may have valuable negotiation or mediation skills, but socio-cultural factors inhibit them from using these abilities too. Likewise violence as said before in the interviews, are some of the attributes women cannot really be involved in the conflict and peace processes. This factor of domestic violence is a big barrier in women's role in conflict solving. Which means to get involved in the peace processes and you are being battered every day, brings fear and threats for you to speak or contribute any idea about bringing peace on a conflict.

Meanwhile, poverty as said in the findings is another greatest form of violence, because it incapacitates and undermines creativity, possibilities and potentials of women will obviously die out. Women, in this kind of society are often poor and the men gain more power through their wealth and dominance over the women. Thus this violence tends to silence women and they feel threatened which they avoid domestic violence with their spouse by not getting involved in situations where they can speak against an act which the man must have committed to the woman. Under such conditions peace is of course difficult to attain and women's abilities to participate in its acquisition and maintenance is questionable. Women cannot rise above household and family conflicts and issues of physical survival that take precedence over those of social and political security.

Another critical analysis is that of the women and their education. The education which women receive does not prepare them to be ready with issues of conflict and peace building, which very few courses are in that domain for peace building and peace nurturing of the women. Even though there are challenges women face in the participation of peace building, which is being inhibited by a series of factors like which can be resolved and women will be fully involved in peace processes. For example, the society should understand the women at individual and societal level in the society in which the women are. They society themselves should equip the women's skills, knowledge and put in resources that can meet the challenges the women face in their specific groups and individual level. In spite of the shortcomings, for example, there are schools programs, with other institutions which women can attend. Is only to make these

institutions have the curriculum to meet the needs of women in respect to their roles as peace makers or builders of peace.

Although limited women's organization and associations are providing valuable spaces for opportunities for the expansion of women's skills, knowledge and resources but some women's organizations have been mobilizing and lobbying, campaigning against violence, unfair and oppressive laws, poverty, discrimination and domestic violence. The case of the Catholic Women Association in Buea municipality, taking actions in sponsoring programs and workshops about the rights of women and having conflict resolution meetings on settle matters brought to them. They might be petty conflicts but they help to bring peace in the community in which they live. These activities have far reaching potentials for peace. Through these activities women are taking a strong stand against wars and violence of all kinds. The success of a group or association of women such as CWA is a typical example as they have branches scatter all over the Buea municipality and other parts of Cameroon.

Even though limited women's organizations and associations are still very few in the country, and the skills of women too is limited as they lack this opportunities for training. Women's organizations have been mobilized, lobbying and campaigning against structural violence, unfair and oppressive laws, poverty, discrimination and domestic violence. These activities have far-reaching potential for peace. Through these activities women are taking a strong stand against wars and violence of all sorts. Women easily team up in groups and have force in fostering decisions to bring peace in any community if some factors don't hinder them. For the women to play their peacemakers role effective and efficiently, they need an enabling social, political and economic empowerment. It is very evident that women take advantage of their full position when the conditions favour them, they are the ones who train the children and even influence those in their community or around them including their husbands. The number of women in the decision table or peace making process is very little due to the facts of low educational opportunities given to them. Women are like care taker of the family, when their attention is not focused in the family, the family will fall apart as well the community. Take the case of a situation where children are left alone because their parents migrate in search of money of better living. The consequences of them separating from their children are huge. Moreover, the age of the child and the duration of the separation matters. Family separation too is another consequences, even if is within the country or community. They might not be divorced but as said earlier. The mother in the house is the role model for morals to be

sustained in the family. That is why, when these morals are sprawling out, the consequences are teenage pregnancy and juvenile delinquency. Then the community starts to judge the family with this attitude, this is a negative force for the children's upbringing. With what the other respondent said, about husbands going to the city and returning very late, giving them false promises. Adults sometimes try to comfort children of migrants by saying they will soon be reunited or meet their mummy or daddy. Thus the motivation for them to work hard in school is a little bit slow and they don't really tend to maintain their friendships. This means if the children do not join their parents quickly as they were told, the consequences will not be good for them because that will strain their relationships with those around them or giving care to them.

To conclude, Betty Bigombe in an interview in ¹⁸PRI, said she had gone ignoring women, only for her to realize that women's role in mediation is very important. About her experience she says that, we talk about women as victims, but the women suffer consequences of war, but at the same time women are 'doers'. But why are they not in the negotiation table? Betty Bigombe said, 'using the South Sudan as an example, some challenges for inclusion of women in the process. The government side did not have any women on their negotiating team and the issue at hand was to persuade the government of South Sudan to include women on their team'' which is called demographic power she says. She said more countries in Africa have larger female population than male. This means leaving women out of process means, leaving out the majority of the population. Further Betty Bigombe asserts that in the case of South Sudan the constitution stipulates that 30% of all government delegations must be women. Eventually the government of South Sudan agreed to include women in the delegation.

Although it is said that women are often seen as too emotional to mediate or participate in negotiations, especially when atrocities have been committed by the parties involved. Bigombe admits that mediation can be very straining, with parties trying to justify actions of rape, murder abduction etc. 'Emotions, yes can be very emotional' She says, women can sometimes sit on their anger, so that it does not overcome them. According to Betty Bigombe, the emotions sometimes help to get people to think more objectively beyond the mere pursuit of one's own interests. She came back to the event of South Sudan describing her experience with the women who were brought to Addis Abba to address both parties of conflict. 'You can

¹⁸Peace Research Institute in Oslo

see that they talked from their hearts, talking about the costs of war and I could see most of the men looking down because the message was so strong''. To Betty Bigombe, there is nothing wrong with emotions, if it can open the hearts and minds of the negotiators, and for them to think about the picture of what happened, rather than what they want. Then is a good thing. Basically what I saw in the CWA conflict resolution meetings in the cases which were tried. Sometimes very hard stories came with emotions, during the sharing. Again, the women as said are seen as mothers in the community and respect is being given to them as they speak.

CHAPTER SIX

This chapter contains the recommendation of the findings about women and their roles in conflict solving, my personal observation of what I saw in the field and the perspective of women and what has come out of this research work.

6.1 Recommendations

Looking at the cultural view of the African woman and, a Cameroonian woman who is in a particular cultural milieu in Buea. I will like to recommend the following points in order to improve the social interactions between the men, women, children in the domain of peace building and conflict solving. The number one aspect should be:

...Removal of some bad cultural practices for example, leaving out a girl child solely for marriage, and avoid sending a girl child for early marriage in the pretext of having more kids for the family.

...As cited above by the response of one respondent, girls should be trained in schools, that is being educated in the area of peace building and conflict solving, knowing their rights as good citizens and productive citizens will build their self- esteem. This means fair and better education for girls. Programs such as Democracy programs should be implemented also.

.... Promotion of Women Initiative groups, where they could meet and dialogue especially about issues of peace to build sustainable peace in their various communities.

..... Fostering more NGOs to activate small loans given to women, to alleviate poverty. One respondent talked about women looking up on their men and not allowed to work and make money for themselves as loans are not given to them because they are women, unless their men surety them. This program of Income Generating Activities should be a focus to promote the women to be self-sustainable and avoid conflict in the family with their husbands because of the economy. Poverty has been some of the sole causes of conflict in families.

...I will recommend those in charge in NGOs where women have taken some roles in conflict solving and peace building, the events and cases should be documented, to help publicize the work and role women play in peace processes.

However, to the above analysis, though women are seen as mothers and with responsibility for them taking care of their families, my view is that, I observed they can cultivate and instill patience and proper conduct in the family. Which makes them to also have a special quality that makes the society to see them as mothers and women are good in communication because

in the society of Buea and Cameroon as a whole, a woman is seen as a symbol for peace. They have patience to listen than men. If you see a man and a woman on the road, the first person you will try to help first who is in trouble is the woman. The women, I observe have a good communication ability therefore these skills can be put in peace processes system in the society. This is because women, can easily put themselves in the persons shoes (the women are empathetic), a good skill for a good counselor, the one who is able to empathize in every situation. So if efforts and resources are put to educate the women and empower them in the front line of peace process, there will not be any regrets for that society as they will benefit and breed a peaceful environment which will be good for all.

Furthermore from my personal observation in the field, following the peace solving meetings, I attended, I saw that the effective participation of women in peace building and conflict solving cannot just happen immediately, unless women are appropriately educated from childhood and their skills sharpened during adulthood, this should be done in order to sustain peace and let it be an ongoing issue in every community or society. No girl child in any community should be kept at home, being nurtured for marriage.

For the welfare of children, I will recommend the follow points:

..Be honest with children about obstacles to family reunion abroad or in the city depending on the case.

..Be honest with children about problems that might prevent parents from returning on holidays.

..Give children of migrants support with homework and other aspects of schooling that their caregivers maybe unable to provided.

.. The case of women, the state should give more social support and human welfare for the women.

.. Provide and give opportunities for women to have education in all works of life especially in the domain of peace as women are seen as peacemakers even in their homes.

On the hand, there is the Perspective of women and the view of what has come out of this research work. The women looked at the fact that, the society today has been caught up by the post modernity which has depreciated the traditional settings of old times. Some of it has been for good and some of it has deteriorated the society which only the same players are involved in building the society. So the women call for recognition of their roles to be fixed or repaired. So they have taken a leading role to be in front to promote this dilemma. The women saw that

with all criticisms, there should be the need to revamp the educational systems of their community with moral education help in the societal harmony which will keep a better and peaceful community in which they live. Thus they said is only them who can maintain peace and allow it to work effectively than those from outside, because they are the one who know where the “the shoes pinches” Another pertinent perspective from the women was that of prevention of violence, better still prevention of perpetrators. That implies an acute problem of conflict which seems dormant but is happening in the society. That is to prevent sexual violence against women, which also implies looking at the individual perpetrators and their backgrounds. By fostering cultures in which perpetrators of sexual violence are exposed and condemned. As a consequence, we have historically known very little about the ways in which rape is used in different wars; why this is the preferred form of violence in certain settings. Also how the victims of rape and their societies live with these experiences after the war has ended or in the families with step father or senior step son of the younger wife and what political impact these acts of violence might have during and after a conflict.

In other words, the ways in which sexual violence in war has been theorized up until now have been based on empirical data from only one of the groups involved in this violent coercive relationship of victims. In order to make development of these aspects, we need to put together empirical data that bring the perceptions and voices of perpetrators into the equation. When a person in a war front kills without violating the rules of war, he/she is usually not regarded as a murderer in the terrain of war, and often likely will never kill again. Likewise in the perpetrator of sexual violence in war may not be a rapist with history of offences involving sexual violence prior to war and that violence may or may not have a bearing on his or her behavior after the war.

To conclude o this perspective with women, we need to understand the roles and experiences of men and women, masculinity and femininity, victims and perpetrators in order to move from and exclusive focus on protection to a more engaged focus on prevention. Women have rights to live peacefully in every environment in the world today.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will have to summarize all what I have been writing from chapter one to chapter six. And also to give a conclusion of the work done. In this thesis I have looked at the Cameroonian women in general, putting in the general views on the CWA group and how it functioned in the communities of Buea municipality. With the data I collected in the field I came into certain conclusions about the Catholic Women Association in Buea municipality of Cameroon.

The association of the Catholic Mission is all over Cameroon, but I concentrated on Buea municipality. As Cameroon, is divided into the French and the English speaking people. Sometimes the cultures differ but most commonly, the characteristics and traits are the same in the Roman Catholic Mission. There is uniqueness in their function because they have one common goal which is to be seen as a role model in the society, emulating the mother of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary. The CWA serve as a heart in the community of the people. Because the community rely mostly on the fairness which is being carried out there because, many tend to ‘fear’ God as the CWA is related with the church. So cases being carried to the group are considered sacred and feared by people in the community which entails honesty and forgiveness of the heart.

On the hand, there is the Perspective of women and the view of what has come out of this research work. The women looked at the fact that, the society today has been caught up by the post modernity which has depreciated the traditional settings of old times. Some of it has been for good and some of it has deteriorated the society. It means the same players in the society being the men and the women must fix it or repair it for greater development and peace dignity. The women in Cameroon and Buea municipality have taken a leading role to kill dilemma of conflict and promote peace in their society. The women saw that with all criticisms, there should be the need to revamp the educational systems of their community with moral education which will help in the societal harmony will keep a better and peaceful community in which they live. Thus only the women from within the community can maintain peace and allow it to work effectively than those from outside, because they are the ones who know where the ‘the

shoes pinches’’ Another pertinent perspective from the women was that of prevention of violence, better still prevention of perpetrators. That implies an acute problem of conflict which seems dormant but is happening in the society. That is to prevent sexual violence against women, which also implies looking at the individual perpetrators and their backgrounds. By fostering cultures in which perpetrators of sexual violence are exposed and condemned. As a consequence, we have historically known very little about the ways in which rape is used in different wars; why this is the preferred form of violence in certain settings. Also how the victims of rape and their societies live with these experiences after the war has ended and what political impact these acts of violence might have during and after a conflict. In other words, the ways in which sexual violence in war has been theorized up until now have been based on empirical data from only one of the groups involved in this violent coercive relationship of victims. In order to make development of these aspects, we need to put together empirical data that bring the perceptions and voices of perpetrators into the equation. When a person in a war front kills without violating the rules of war, he/she is usually not regarded as a murderer in the terrain of war, and often likely will never kill again. Likewise in the perpetrator of sexual violence in war may not be a rapist with history of offences involving sexual violence prior to war and that violence may or may not have a bearing on his or her behavior after the war. So the victims being the women, who are vulnerable group, need to understand their roles on how to deal with matters of this nature in the society. In other word understand these roles and experiences they also have to understand a forum between men and women, masculinity and feminity, victims and perpetrators in order to move from an exclusive focus on protection to a more engaged focus on prevention.

However looking at my personal view on the involvement of women in the peace processes and conflict solving in Cameroon. This falls on the question... What has the role of women in conflict resolution in Cameroon in the Buea helped in peace building in the local communities?’ I will like to contribute that, my observation was a good experience for me to assess if the women are getting into the table of peace building. Women, sometimes if they are not pushed, tend to be very reluctant, this is because of lack of confidence which comes from the educational background of a woman. An African woman, not left out in this guilt of low self-esteem among men, has entered the stage of trying to be in the decision table as well as the peace processes in media. Though the pace is slow but there is awareness in the society of Cameroon today, which is a good start on how to get women involved in the decision table and to mediate peace settlement. Not only women themselves are enthusiastic about their entrance

in the field of peace processes, the men as well. In time past, they men have been handling issues on how to solve conflict and bring peace. They realized that, wars kept on moving from one level to the next until it ate the entire country, and families deteriorating with morals and discipline. Women serve as mothers in the community and mothers to the husbands, it means, she is a counselor for peace. So therefore, ears should be given to the women to speak as that of men to bring peace for the benefit of the whole community. Women are so involved as most of them say, they want to go to school and know their rights, not only as women but as potential citizens of Cameroon.

How has the CWA ideas or women been integrated into Modern Cameroon Society? During my interview, I realized that, men have been participating in conflict solving meetings with women. The only thing about why they are not seen as they are contributing to bring peace in the society or community is that, the cases which were solved or resolved have not been documented. We came to know many conflicts being solved or resolved by men because they were documented and put in books for people to read. These shows- cased their involvement in peace processes. The men have broken some of the cultural practices as I saw in the field. They sit side by side with women in tough issues of conflict, on the best possible way to handle the conflict. They ask final decisions from the women who are in the courtroom as judges of any case. Based on their remarkable role played in their local courtroom of the CWA; some of them were selected to be part of the council of judges in the customary court. I found out because the head woman, whom I work hand in hand with always tell me, she goes to customary court for referred cases from them.

The cultural barriers are being broken gradually. Especially the cultural practices that hinder development. But now that the women have started going to school and sponsors have come in to help send the women back to school, I believe is a good stand to reach the point of building self-esteem and for men giving opportunities to women to be heard, and chances for them to work in offices, is a good sign for development and growth.

Is this group (Catholic Women Association 'CWA') used in a positive peace building or conflict solving forum in Cameroon? Yes the group CWA is seen as a positive peace building mechanism or tool used in the solving conflict now in Cameroon. The branches are located all over Cameroon, propagated by the Roman Catholic Church and sponsored by some NGOs and some partners who are activist for peace building for women. Settlement of conflict does not

look at sexes, but looks at who brings peace in the best way that will be sustainable. If any conflicts which are resolved by women are documented, it will show the work in which they do in the peace process forum. It is said that conflicts from small disputes can result to a conflagration conflict and consequently war and destruction. So if the person that solved the petty conflicts can be recognized to do more, then the society will be at peace and the women at ease for their job.

Why are women always silent in gatherings when men are talking during a conflict resolution meetings in the community? Women are always silent in any conflict resolution meeting because the culture says so. The respondents told me. But now there is an open door for them because that cultural barrier has been broken slowly by men themselves and they have allowed them in some of the meetings to take part and to also give their view points.

The answer to the question of my research which is, what then is *The Role Of Women In The Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon in Buea Municipality in Conflict Solving: As Compared to the African Philosophy*. Looking at this research question and based on the data collected in the field, I found out and came to conclusion that, women are involved in conflict solving and they play a vital role in peace building of family, community and nationwide. Thus breaking down the bad cultural practices in Africa that helps renders development handicap. Where peace is in any country there is development, nothing can be done a conflict zone of any community. The answer is therefore answered partially because, the involvement of women in peace processes, is slow as women are still struggling to be recognized when they carry out any peace talks or negotiations. The men are reluctantly accepting the women into the office of peace processes because of their traditions and cultures. Nevertheless, some men see into it that, when women are not there to support them with their ideas in peace building, they fail in certain aspects like doing follow up to maintain peace in a delinquent child. Mostly after talks and punishment, the father is not there to monitor all the time as the mother will do. The part which is answered here is seen how the men now give opportunities for women to be involved in settling disputes and their points of views are being taken into consideration. I saw men coming in the court room of the Catholic women Association (CWA) to complain about their particular cases of their homes and families. The good thing with this research is that, the involvement of women in the peace building is very progressive and it is fast growing because women are now enlightened ,knowing that they have to go to school and be involved in the

decision table thereafter. Some of the unanswered questions why women are so few in the decision-table I realized were based on the fact that:

- There is lack of proper education given to the women.
- Some men still hold back to the fact of the African culture concerning the women.
- The awareness of the women into conflict process is still very timid.
- Men tend to mock the women who are involved in such mediation as “woman. Man”

This name calling and allegations make the women to stay a far when it comes to media and conflict. Again the government to intervention in sponsoring more women group like the CWA in the country will foster peace as women are easily seen in the culture as peace makers and mothers. Being not only mothers in their families but mothers to the nation. Women should not be ignored because, they serve as the majority in the African community, therefore when they have a public demonstration in the terms of war in the country, the majority will go out to demonstrate and that is why their voices will be heard as they are many. As women come in groups, they have more power and new ideas among themselves. More NGOs, Women groups or associations to keep the women up in times of crisis, both in their homes and community. As the women and children are the most vulnerable when crisis of conflict broke up, then they should be part of solving the conflict, because they are the ones who know where the shoes pinches. The final answer to my research thesis is that, women are involved in peace processes and conflict solving ,but is progressive as they will get better is all the recommendations are fulfilled. Thus the men have started to throw away some of the bad cultural practices which hinder growth in the community. This is a sign that, as compared with the old traditional Africa philosophy about women, being property, the men have seen that ideology as hindering the development and women should be involved. Not all the men buy this ideology but it is in process as the men in the community are educating other men by ways of sending the girl children to school. A man mentioned to me that, a girl child lately is the one that comes back in the family and rescue the family as the boys always are concentrating only with the girls of another family.

Their role in conflict solving and peace building is mostly not documented, so it is seen as if the women do not play any vital role. If the role women play in conflict solving is documented and the women are involved in the conflict solving meetings and seen as important in the

community/government, then, women will start to feel involved and many women will be encouraged to take part in community building with happiness and boldness, which means their self-esteem will eventually rise up.

In conclusion with women and peace building, I realized that, society everywhere has had this culture in looking at a girl child different from that of a boy child. Thus the society has been fixed that way with its view on the two sexes. Watching (*the BBC documentary about Gender and equality April 2014*). The teenage girls in the United Kingdom, Lesotho, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world were interviewed about their life and the way the society look at them. The girls said, they are not allowed to do certain things which the boys are doing. The worst of the case was the teenage girl in Lesotho who said, even to speak loud in a gathering where the men or boys are, she is seen as disrespectful and has lost her morals. She said, that has made her to wonder why, all this has been happening. She wished many times to be as a boy, so that she can do many things and not being sidelined. Because, even when she wants to have a boyfriend of her choice, or someone to marry her of her choice, the parents always want to restrict her because her culture does not permit. Again the bride price (labola¹⁹) is very high. Sometimes up to a hundred cows. It is evident that, the case of Africa seems to be the one that is really in process for change. The others also talked about them, being sidelined not to do certain things like boys but not to be restricted in marriage which is supposed to be chosen by their parents. The overall is that women, in every society are seen as weaker and cannot do certain things which the men can do. Cameroonian women are no exceptions, but they are working towards reaching the stage of having the knowledge on how the society functions and they being part of the society needs to make efforts to contribute for the peace building and growth of that society. (Excerpts documentary BBC News April 2014)

The impact of the exclusion of women to be part of conflict solving process is labeled on the fact that, women and men have different access to resources, power and decision making before any conflict or war or after the war. The experience of women and of men in conflict situations is significantly different. While the entire communities suffer the consequences of conflict, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in the society and their sex. Women are thus caught in a vicious paradox: while they are the main victims of conflicts,

¹⁹ Money paid to the bride's parents from the husband, which is also known as the dowry. Mostly done by the culture in Southern Africa.

they are often powerless to defend themselves, they are excluded from the negotiations during the resolution process and they are confined to a marginal role in the conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts. The general exclusion of women from the decision table position makes them more victimized. But empowering women in conflict situations or processes would help prevent gender based violence such as the terrible crime of rape, force pregnancy, sexual slavery. This aspect as said in the recommendation, if women can be empowered by allowing them to have small loans to start up their business, and be self-sufficient and go to school. The conflicts which affect the entire society will cut down. (Bamlaku 2010:90).

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APPENDIX

ORAL QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

(Personal Information)

Place of residence _____ (Buea Central, Bova, Bolifamba, Maumu, Bonakanda etc)

Visiting _____

Age ___(18-30)___(31-45)___(65 and above)___

Gender _____ Female _____ Male

Education: primary _____ secondary _____ High school _____ university.

Occupation: housewife _____ farming _____ government worker ___ private worker.

Part 2

- 1) Do you know what CWA is all about?
- 2) Has this group helped you? Yes ___ No ___; how important is the group to you?
- 3) Is CWA group involved in conflict solving in the community?
- 4) How many times do you attend the CWA meeting in a month? 2 times ___ 4 times ___
- 5) When did you last attend the CWA meeting, when there was a peace talks on a conflict?
- 6) Are men also part of the conflict resolution meeting or it is basically the women?
- 7) Are you involved in mediating to bring peace when any conflict occurs in the community mixed with other women of different religious background?
- 8) What kind of conflicts do you take part in fostering peace?
- 9) Are the men also part of this meeting?
- 10) Do the person who meet you to resolve any conflicts, come to you because of your religious background or is because you are an elderly woman?
- 11) Is it only women who come to you to seek peace or men too come as well?.

12) Do conflicts too arise in the CWA group where some specific women are called to resolve the conflicts within the group?

13) What kind of conflicts does arise in the group?

14) Apart from being a member of the CWA group, do you still have other group which you belong?

15) Is it a mixed group with men?

16) What do you think about women empowerment in Cameroon and Buea in particular?

17) What do you think about the participation of women in a conflict solving meeting? 18) Does it have an impact in the peace building of Buea municipality and Cameroon in general in the modern era?

19) In your view; would you like to have women as leaders or president?

20) What is your personal feeling working with a woman or a man in the same office or in any conflicts resolution meeting?

21) Is the woman Intelligent Quotient the same as that of a man?

Thank you very much for your time and patience!

Attestation of internship



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Your Ref: -----

Our Ref: 604/14/PV/CUIB

Date: 5 Feb. 2014

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

ATTESTATION OF INTERNSHIP

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear sir/Madame,

This is to testify that the Office of the Provost, Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) facilitated the research of **CHANGBUIN MAGDALINE TSEWAH**, Master Degree Student from the Norwegian School of Theology MF (Oslo University) Norway, on the **Role of Women in Conflict Solving in Cameroon** for a period of two months, precisely from December 15th 2013 to February 15th 2014.

This attestation is meant to serve the purpose for which it is intended.

Prof: Wilfred A. NDONGKO

PROVOST



Letter from supervisor

To whom it may concern



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Oslo June 7, 2013

MASTER STUDENT

This is to confirm that **Changbuin Magdaline Tsewah** is a Master student at MF Norwegian School of Theology. In that capacity she is doing a Master Thesis where she has to do field research.

The field research is supposed to be undertaken during autumn 2013 and winter/spring 2014 in Cameroon. As her supervisor I ask anybody contacted concerning the Master Thesis to receive her well, and if possible, answer the questions she might have.

Sincerely

Roar G. Fotland
Associate professor

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