
REPORT

O Cameroon: Workshop for Peace

May 4-6, 2019 — University of Toronto



We all have a role to play.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

O Cameroon: Workshop for Peace brought together scholars and practitioners to brainstorm feasible action items to diminish violence, safeguard civilians, and look toward peace in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis. Specifically, participants included university faculty, students, non-profit representatives, journalists, and influential individuals in policy spheres from countries across Africa, Europe, and North America.

Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis, which has deteriorated since the second half of 2016, has created two tracks of challenges. On one track, there is the daily violence, human rights violations, and insecurity everyday Cameroonian people face on the ground. As the level of violence continues to escalate, civilians face harsh humanitarian realities. On another track, the 'Anglophone Problem'—a question of incorporation and marginalization of Anglophone Cameroonians in the state of Cameroon—hangs over the conflict. The deeper, nuanced questions of whether Cameroon should be a unitary, decentralized, or federalist state, *or* if the Anglophone zone should secede, propel and frustrate this conflict.

This workshop's results do not advocate for any one way forward for Cameroon, except for the recognition that violence by anyone, any side, is wrong and has not solved, and will not solve, the current crisis in Cameroon. Participants came together to discuss Cameroon's situation and consider ways to make progress—primarily on track one—while keeping in mind the deeper questions of Anglophone integration lurking within, behind, and around this conflict. Participants looked beyond their diverging opinions and beliefs to focus on what they could agree about, which included that violence must diminish and civilians must be protected so that paths toward justice, peace, and resolution can be identified and paved.

The workshop considered inputs to, impacts of, and possible solutions for the Anglophone Crisis. The following report contains the information and ideas shared during the workshop, categorized into key topics and themes.

Ultimately, the ideas that came up again and again included the need to walk together, the need to speak with a single voice for peace, the need to change narratives, and the importance of youth and education.

Most fundamentally, participants agreed that everyone has a role to play in helping resolve this conflict. These roles are different by person, by area of expertise, by background, by location, and more. But everyone can contribute something. And everyone should.

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INTRODUCTION: WORKSHOP OVERVIEW AND GOALS

The Anglophone Crisis occurring in Cameroon's South West and North West regions is destroying thousands of lives and has ramifications for all of Cameroon.

This 'Workshop for Peace' brought together experts—academics, journalists, nongovernmental organization representatives, and influential individuals—who care about Cameroon. While the term 'peace conference' refers to a diplomatic meeting among warring parties, this workshop did not include members of the Cameroonian government or of Anglophone separatist militias. The workshop was non-partisan and apolitical—it did not take any side in the conflict. Instead, it focused solely on finding actions to diminish violence, protect civilian lives, and help establish foundations for 'peace' in the South West and North West regions.

This workshop occurred from May 4 to 6, 2019, in Toronto, Canada. It was hosted at the University of Toronto with support from various individuals, groups, and faculties. Over the three days, 45 people participated in person and online, and ten volunteers assisted.

The Workshop for Peace was action-oriented. It aimed to formulate concrete action items—both high-level and grassroots-level—to diminish violence and protect civilians; to break deadlock; and to rebuild confidence and trust among the warring parties in order for genuine, Cameroonian-led dialogue on sustainable solutions to take place.

Many sources are calling for international mediation of the Crisis. However, international rules prevent bodies such as the United Nations from intervening without the warring parties' consent. International precedents signal that these rules will not be overridden until it is too late. This workshop aspired to circumvent international inertia and tried to begin a process toward halting bloodshed and contribute to efforts aimed at peaceful negotiations and dialogue.

O Cameroon: Workshop for Peace addressed three goals:

- 1) diminishing violence
- 2) protecting civilian lives and 'peace-building'
- 3) finding ways for all Cameroonians to navigate their own future

This workshop also discussed:

- i) ensuring children have access to education
- ii) putting concerted pressure on countries and international bodies to push for resolution
- iii) raising awareness about relevant legal and human rights frameworks
- iv) possibilities for knowledge that workshop members may continue researching, with Cameroon as the basis for study

We employed the Chatham House Rule to allow participants to speak freely. By the Rule, anything said at the workshop can be quoted but cannot be attributed to any person. Individuals may say that they attended but cannot reveal others who went. There is no list of participants.

COMMUNIQUE RELEASED AFTER WORKSHOP

May 6, 2019
Toronto, CANADA

ENCOURAGING PEACE IN CAMEROON **Ideas from Experts**

Today scholars, journalists, leaders from non-government organizations, and other experts emerged from a workshop held in Toronto, Canada, with a list of non-violent measures they committed to take to help protect human lives in Cameroon.

Held from May 4 to 6, this workshop brought big thinkers together to develop ideas for actions to diminish violence in Cameroon's English-speaking regions. Participants were not only from Cameroon, but also from Canada, the USA, Europe, and other parts of Africa. University of Toronto was represented by faculty members and students from the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Faculty of Medicine, The International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation, and the Rotman School of Management.

Cameroon, a country located in Central Africa, is currently suffering a crisis sparked by sociopolitical events in the two Anglophone regions of this majority-Francophone country. Soldiers from the government of Cameroon are pitted against armed separatist groups, and the citizenry is unsafely caught in the middle. There is unspeakable violence. Soldiers burn houses, torture, and shoot indiscriminately. Separatist groups cut off fingers, force people to stay in their homes for days, prevent children from attending school, and close markets and businesses. This violence makes normal life impossible for innocent civilians. So far, the government has been unable to stabilize the situation, and the Anglophone leaders and populations have not created a unified message. This situation has significantly worsened over the past 2½ years.

Workshop participants spoke with one voice that Cameroonian Anglophones and Francophones can and must work together to find solutions.

Violence by anyone, any side, is wrong, and has not solved the current crisis in Cameroon.

All Cameroonians deserve and need protection from violence. Thousands have been killed. There are hundreds of thousands who have been forced out of their homes, with nowhere to hide except the bush. In many areas, there are severe shortages of food, water, shelter, and medical help. Sexual violence, malnutrition, and idle youth that may take up arms are among the grave consequences.

The government of Cameroon could take more efficient actions to address Anglophone complaints of longstanding marginalization.

Dialogue is possible and can identify initiatives that will create positive change. Educational and court reforms, social justice, inclusive community dialogue, accountability processes, and infrastructure commitments are concrete steps that could ease the current crisis.

All actors in this crisis have roles to play in diminishing the violence. The government of Cameroon, the separatists, civil society organizations, and all others can embrace ideas for the diminishing of violence.

SCHEDULED PROCEEDINGS

Day 1

08:00 Registration

08:30 Welcome, overview of guidelines, land acknowledgement, participant self-introductions

10:00 Brief remarks by three speakers

11:00 Group session: Pooling our knowledge, laying out different dimensions of the conflict *What is happening in Anglophone Cameroon? What are the key issues and interests at stake in this conflict? In this open floor session, participants share information and their perceptions of what is going on, what actors, interests, and issues are at stake, and why the conflict has manifested as it has. Participants to speak openly and passionately about their understandings—participants will be encouraged to respectfully air divergent views on the Crisis. Participants will end this session with a shared understanding of different aspects of the problem.*

13:30 Make plans for breakout groups, brainstorm action items in breakout groups *In breakout groups, participants will brainstorm ideas—both top-down and bottom-up—to diminish violence and protect civilian lives. Ideas may include ceasefires, peaceful protests, pressure from the Canadian government, or open letters from mothers of dying soldiers to President Paul Biya. Breakout groups will consider and refine these ideas, and map out plans to operationalize them.*

17:00 Day ends

Day 2

09:30 Recap the day before, check in with groups

10:00 Breakout groups meet again to go over action items

10:30 Group session: Coming together to discuss action items

Participants will revise and verify action items brainstormed on Day One. Then, participants will commit to completing the steps needed to realize each action item. Participants will task themselves openly—individually, in groups, and as a whole—to achieve these action items, and to engage key contacts for support. Coming out of this session, we will have a vetted list of action items to diminish violence and help civilian lives. Participants will commit to tasks to operationalize these items.

12:50 Brief remarks by two speakers

13:00 Spotlight on humanitarian efforts in the context of peace-building

Participants involved in nonprofit organizations addressing needs during the Crisis will each have an opportunity to highlight their efforts. We will discuss the role of humanitarianism in the conflict resolution and peace-building. Coming out of this session, we will compile a resource list of vetted, on-the-ground initiatives presently in place to assist with peace-building and the restoration of safe, quality life for Cameroonians during and following the diminishment of violence.

14:30 Brief remarks by two speakers

15:00 Group session: Looking back to look ahead — talking about Cameroon's future

This session hopes to consider the fuller depth of the Anglophone Problem, and perhaps the 'Cameroon Problem.' It will ask: 'What are the dimensions—both intangible and concrete—of these problems? IF the violence diminishes, civilians are protected, and confidence-building measures are put in place between the warring parties, WHAT paths forward can properly address this problem and give all Cameroonians a voice in the future?' This session aims to provoke hypothetical thought and discussion.

16:30 Group session: Opportunity for all participants to share something, if they choose

17:30 Day ends

Day 3

09:15 Focus on practical operationalization of action items—creating action plans

10:50 Panel by journalists on information sharing

11:20 The plan going forward—immediate outcomes of the workshop? long-term follow-up?

14:00 Day ends

Educational Diversity ↔ State harmonisation of education

Some external actors want change ↔ External actors prefer status quo

ACTORS

Many actors involved in the conflict were identified, listed here in alphabetical order:

- African Union
- Alternative military groups (which can delegitimize fighters)
- Amba Boys
- Anglophone citizens
- Anglophone diaspora and diaspora groups
- Anti-Sardine Brigade (BAS)
- Ayah Foundation
- BBC (lacks current news on Cameroon)
- BIR (rapid intervention battalion)
- Cameroon Oil Transport Company
- Cameroon Trisure Channel 1, Channel 2 (both pro government)
- Cameroonian citizens
- Cameroonian military forces
- CEMAC
- Children who have been kidnapped and their families
- China National Petroleum
- Civil Society
- CNN (which lacks information, access, and has colonial legacy)
- Commission on Bilingualism and Multiculturalism
- Credible civil society
- CRTV (pro-government news)
- Cultural groups
- Equinoxe TV
- European nations
- External lenders: Euro bonds, China, International Financial Institutions
- Exxon / Mobil
- Former French Ambassador to Cameroon
- Francophone diaspora and diaspora groups
- Governing elites of Cameroon
- Government of Cameroon
- Government of China
- Government of France
- Government of Nigeria
- Government officials that support President Biya
- Governor Maconnerie, Red Cross Franc (Free masons) ??
- Governor of North West Region
- Governor of South West Region
- Humanitarian relief organizations

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- Informal diaspora groups
 - Internally displaced persons (IDPs)
 - International media
 - I.O.s
 - Judges
 - Local Francophone media
 - MINAT
 - Ministry of Communication
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Ministry of Territorial Administration
 - Missionaries, Catholic and Presbyterian
 - National authorities
 - Neighbouring countries
 - Njengi
 - OHADA (international group of supporters of civil law)
 - Parliament
 - Police
 - Political leaders of MRC (namely, Maurice Kamto)
 - Political leaders of SDF
 - Political leaders of SRC
 - Political leader platform 'NOW'
 - Political parties
 - President Paul Biya
 - President's Special Advisor
 - Private sectors
 - Public corporations
 - Red Dragons (Anglophone militia)
 - Red Lions (Anglophone militia)
 - Red Tigers (Anglophone militia)
 - Regional authorities
 - Regional institutions
 - Refugees
 - Religious leaders
 - Religious organizations
 - RFI (lacks current news on Cameroon)
 - Secret Service DGRE
 - Security forces
 - Security Services
 - SEMIL
 - Separatists
 - Separatists advocating for non-violent measures
 - Social media
 - Some Francophone teachers in the media (both private and official)

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- Traditional authorities
 - Traditional media
 - United Nations
 - United Nations Security Council
 - United States AFRICOM
 - United States White House
 - Women's groups

THEMES

Why Are We Coming Together?

O Cameroon: Workshop for Peace presented itself as an opportunity for brainstorming feasible actions to diminish violence, protect civilians, and help pave paths toward peace in Cameroon. On the first day, participants self-introduced, describing from what perspective they were approaching the workshop. Participants' reasons for attending continued to be revealed throughout the three days. Participants had multiple reasons, along with different perspectives about the purpose of the workshop.

For many participants, both personal and professional connections and effects of the Anglophone Crisis prompted their involvement. For some attendees, their own Anglophone Cameroonian heritage played a role: "I came out as Anglophone recently," said one participant. Another explained, "I grew up knowing we were English-speaking Cameroonians and as a researcher I came to understand...I've never really felt fully incorporated in the state of Cameroon." Other attendees expressed a moral proximity to Cameroon, or an understanding of the challenges people in Cameroon are facing: "I can imagine what happens every day for the children in Cameroon." Many participants had experienced personal loss of family and friends due to this conflict. One attendee had lost 28 family members, some of whom were burned and brutally killed.

Many participants reflected on the effect of the crisis across the whole country of Cameroon: "Right now, everyone in Cameroon is a victim." Families, extended families, and friends are being affected. In essence, "this is very, very personal."

Participants also emphasized feeling shock that Cameroon is in conflict. "I always bragged because we were different from so many countries in Africa and I thought it was a strength—the bilingualism. If I go back home now, I won't be able to go to Bamenda...I used to brag about being unique but today I am sad and frustrated." One participant described Cameroon before this conflict as a country with pride, diversity, African literature, and good prospects for the future. Another participant reminded the room that, simply, *this is really happening*.

The sense of urgency of seeking peace came across strongly in these participant self-introductions. "This is maybe a turning point," said one participant, "Either we do something now or we won't be able to do something." One participant projected ahead: "What will happen in ten years? We will say then that we could have done better...This meeting will haunt you in ten years." The urgent need to find solutions permeated the atmosphere.

One participant warned that we could hold 50 peace conferences without any progress. We need to actually address these issues and talk to people on all sides of the conflict, this participant urged. This

**“ Today in
Cameroon, not
only are words
hurting our
people but sticks
and stones are
breaking our
bones. ”**

focus on problem-solving for solutions encompasses one of the workshop's key purposes as expressed by participants. Some participants viewed this workshop as a space to come together to freely express themselves in a positive manner to try to find solutions to help the people of Cameroon. One participant noted: "We are talking about Cameroon far away from Cameroon." Certainly it is unusual to hold an event about Cameroon from Canada. As another participant explained, "It hasn't happened in Cameroon and fortunately friends of Cameroon have provided this platform." Overall, participants expressed that they were attending the workshop to learn, share experiences, and find solutions.

There was also a sentiment of shared understanding of, and duty for, Cameroon. Some participants noted that it is difficult to get people to understand what is going on, and that the Anglophone Crisis is highly underreported. One participant stated clearly, "I am very shocked about the silence of the majority in Cameroon and in the international community." Those who attended the workshop were united in their recognition of the atrocities and pain in Cameroon today and expressed a camaraderie and duty to come together to help move toward a place of dialogue and peace. "I came to my work because I am lucky to be here today and many people aren't." "Cameroon belongs to all of us, we belong to the world." "We think we can take a step back when we are not Cameroonian—but we really can't."

Participants expressed optimism at the calibre of other participants: "Sitting through the introductions reminded me about the calibre of this room; this is substance. With your expertise you are thought leaders; this is what our country needs." Participants came from various academic and practical backgrounds, and the wide range of research and policy interests also contributed to their decisions to attend the workshop. Participants had interest in academic research, journalism, education, human rights activism, building peace, social justice, health, development work, overcoming conflict, helping displaced persons and refugees, conserving wildlife, and promoting sustainability. Participants expressed wanting to share insights and learn at this workshop.

What Is Peace?

The idea of 'peace' was central to this workshop. "Cameroonians are yearning for peace," said one participant. Peace has multiple notions, however. Peace for the people may be different from peace for the government, or even peace for peace's sake. We must ask ourselves 'WHOSE peace?' some participants urged. The peace we seek is not peace for the ruling class to maintain the status quo. It is not peace to keep tapping resources for the elites. It is peace, justice, and accountability for all people in Cameroon.

Some participants stressed the need to place social justice at the root of all efforts for peace, and to always prioritize respect for human dignity.

Workshop participants could agree that stopping violence immediately is a key goal and step toward peace. However, as one participant lamented, even if the violence were to stop immediately, the damage this conflict has already caused will take at least 20 years to resolve. In this situation, when a leader does not agree to stop violence immediately, and when stopping violence alone will not resolve

the conflict, we must look to other steps and next steps. If not, any transition forward will have enormous ongoing costs. Forums for Cameroonians to engage one another about what comes next if violence diminishes and social justice measures are installed are crucial for the country's future.

One participant said, “the average Anglophone Cameroonian is crying for peace, they don't care who brings peace.” Keeping the nuances of ‘peace’ and challenges beyond stopping violence in mind, participants urged one another that “[w]e all need to be vectors of peace.”

The Problems

The Facts — What is Happening

Participants discussed the details of the situation. This crisis involves violence and atrocities, killing and burning, and mass displacement, leading to huge numbers of both internally displaced persons and refugees. The conflict has witnessed abductions of administrative, religious, and traditional authorities, along with politicians and civilians from the nomadic Muslim Mbororo group. There have been targeted assassinations of defence and security forces, religious and administrative authorities, and civilians—including Mbororo people and women. The crisis has engendered myriad human rights violations, including threats toward human rights defenders, arbitrary detentions, violations of human rights to education and healthcare, stealing and looting, enlisting children (including girls) as soldiers, and rape and sexual violence. Hundreds of villages have been burned. These atrocities and human rights violations have been perpetrated by all the warring parties, including specifically the Cameroonian government, Cameroonian security forces and the Bataillon D'intervention Rapide (BIR), Ambazonians, and other armed groups.

Direct consequences of the conflict include a large influx of refugees to Nigeria and massive numbers of internally displaced persons and dislocated families. The proliferation of armed groups has led to thousands of civilians killed, over 250 documented abductions by armed groups, and unknown/over 100 sexual abuses of underage girls by all parties. This conflict has sparked fractures between Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians, which has escalated to ‘tribalism’ and “loss of identity.” For one participant, the three greatest problems in the conflict are (a) violence, (b) food shortages and malnutrition, and (c) lack of safe spaces or processes. Schools and universities across the Anglophone regions have largely been closed. Many hospitals and health centres are non-operational and health workers attacked. Hundreds of civilians have been killed.

The acts in this conflict certainly constitute ‘crimes against humanity,’ although they may not yet have reached the threshold of ‘genocide.’ The gravity of this violence is evidenced nevertheless: “You meet kids who from the sound of a gun can tell you who is firing the weapon and the type of weapon.” As one participant explained, “even the people who are walking in Anglophone Cameroon are the walking dead. It has impacted all.”

Appeasement measures by the government include the release of certain consortium leaders and activists, the translation of Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) into English, the creation of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and

Multiculturalism and the National Committee of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, the establishment of a division of common law at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM), and the creation of a humanitarian assistance fund. The measures, however, have not demonstrated effectiveness, and their message diminishes in the face of numerous atrocities committed by government and security forces.

Initially, the conflict was between the government and the people. Now, the conflict is between the government and armed groups, and people are caught in the middle.

Past, Future & Marginalization

As one participant stated, Cameroon's crisis is multifaceted and must be unpacked. This conflict is a crisis born from the past that affects the present and future.

In terms of the past, this participant said, "for the past six decades, the grievances are real." Grievances expressed at the workshop centred on political marginalization. With many official documents published only in French, not in English, "how do you make an official agreement or treaty?" Information in official settings, such as courtrooms, is often mistranslated, causing it to lose meaning in the eyes of citizens. As mentioned earlier, one participant noted that as an English-speaking Cameroonian, "I've never really felt fully incorporated in the state of Cameroon." This divide has caused a feeling of fracture in society.

These past grievances led to the 2016 peaceful protest where lawyers wanted to let the world know the problems they were facing as common law practitioners. When the lawyers were beaten and left in the mud, trying to seek refuge from police, Anglophone sentiments were inflamed. These actions eventually led to calls for Anglophone Cameroonians' right to self-determination. The conflict that ensued has given rise to the present violent situation.

Cameroon's future may now be envisioned as a landscape that is both fractured and shaking. It hinges on a central question about the composition of the nation from an Anglophone-Francophone perspective. One participant said this question's "complexities that are three-fold: (1) Should Anglophones be able to secede? (2) Should there be the adoption of a federal government? (3) Should there be the maintenance of some form of decentralization?" Indeed, "the crisis of the future brings with it the complexities of the dilemmas we face."

The Tensions Extrapolated

During an exercise on Day One of the workshop, participants brainstormed the top tensions that plague Cameroon's situation, articulating the polarities of these tensions. Here is the **list**, with additional notes in *italics*.

Believe in change ⇔ **Not believe in change**

Citizenship, identity, cultural recognition ⇔ **Lack thereof**

-one key citizenship issue mentioned is Cameroon's banning of dual nationalities and unwelcoming treatment of Cameroonians who have left the country when they visit

Agreement that there is a problem ⇔ Denial that there is a problem

-one issue mentioned was that initially many people denied that any problem existed

Anglophone federalists ⇔ Anglophone separatists

Federal form of state ⇔ Regional form of state ⇔ Secession ⇔ Status quo

Those who see no future in Cameroon ⇔ Those who say to give in on anything is to lose everything

-some of those fighting are young men who feel directionless and hopeless about their prospects in Cameroon

Hope ⇔ Hopelessness

-some of those fighting are young men who feel directionless and hopeless about their prospects in Cameroon

Constitutional theory of language policy ⇔ Daily reality of language policy

Inequality and exclusion ⇔ Access to opportunity

The tensions seem to centre around two topics. First, the acknowledgement of grievances and existence of problems (e.g. language policy in theory and in practice) and, accordingly, openness to change the situation. Second, a hopelessness or resentment for lack of opportunities or for only opportunities granted to people selectively.

Other Dimensions of the Crisis, As Mentioned at the Workshop

HEALTH

From a health dimension, this conflict is challenging. The two main problems are (1) sexual and gender-based violence and (2) malnutrition. It is primarily the military that perpetrates sexual and gender-based violence, and there are some indications that violence within families escalates during times of stress and conflict. Girls under 18 years old who have no national ID cards are often targets. Military men will demand to see their ID cards and when they cannot produce them, military will rape them. It is highly difficult to send or receive information about these incidents without providing identifying information and thus endangering the hospital and the victim. Thus, much of it remains undocumented.

To address sexual and gender-based violence requires both medical and psychosocial support for girls. Further, getting information out about incidents and how to recognize and treat sexual and gender-based violence is key. These are humanitarian issues, and the United Nations should work with local non-governmental organizations to address them. In terms of accountability for the perpetrators, these criminals are supposed to be held accountable to their commanders, even within the military. It is unclear if commanders know if their men are committing these acts.

This crisis has caused great insecurity for doctors and healthcare personnel. Doctors do not know what will happen as hospitals and those inside them are threatened and attacked. Sometimes, patients admitted to the hospital recovering from the violence will become victims again when the hospital is attacked. Doctors and health workers must retain trust from the people—people trust doctors who have vaccinated their children and provided care. To keep this trust, doctors must not give out information to

military, as the military may target the hospital. For these reasons, doctors and health workers do not approach commanders or military to share information, and thus hinder accountability for acts such as sexual and gender-based violence. Perhaps information-sharing between hospitals and commanders for accountability purposes can be done in very specific, private, and controlled ways—but this means that, frequently, it cannot be done.

Health workers and hospitals must know which organizations on the ground are friends and which ones are not. For instance, it is beneficial to have Médecins Sans Frontières personnel at the hospital. If the military or separatist militias know MSF is there, they might not burn or attack the hospital.

ECONOMIC

This conflict has greatly impacted the economy by slowing production and frustrating economic outputs. Although difficult to calculate, more than 18,000 formal-sector employees have been threatened, and at least 7,000 persons have lost jobs. Total financial loss from 2016 to 2019 is greater than \$2,153 billion XAF, and \$2 billion XAF alone was paid in ransom to free 212 people.

COMMUNICATIONS

This conflict is, in many ways, a ‘communications conflict.’ The crisis is highly underreported. There is a lot of misinformation being shared. The warring parties at the polarities are those with the loudest voices, drowning out more moderate messages. Social media, especially, is fertile ground for radicalization, as gruesome videos and photos are shared widely. Cameroonians face risks of harm for sharing sensitive information about events or atrocities going on in-country. When some activists get information from an event they are connected to, they will pass it on to their other contacts—perhaps journalists—who will pick up the story. Then, the activist can re-tweet the story while concealing their connection to the event. Each person knows who they can trust and it is crucial to keep the original sharers safe.

Crisis as Problem or Symptom?

It is not clear whether this crisis is the problem itself or rather a symptom of a deeper problem. With the current state of this situation, it will take “two to three decades to rebuild a sense of humanity.”

The Role of History

We must revisit where we have come from to fully understand this crisis. “If it was tolerant, if it was people-sensitive, if it was democratic, Cameroon would not be where it is today.”

Standout Events Mentioned at the Workshop

-1884-85: Berlin Conference, *the carving up of Africa*

-1884: German protectorate, *Cameroon as colonial construct (even the name came from Portuguese)*

-1919: UK/France, *divisions of Cameroon*

-1961: plebiscite, *only act of the people vis-a-vis Cameroon’s existence; its the narrow options have framed the debates today in Cameroon*

-1972: reunification, *breached the voted-upon federalist structure, Cameroon became a unitary state*

-2004: Anti-terrorism act, *by this law, even our workshop in Canada focused on peace would be outlawed as a 'terrorist' gathering, which explains some of the risks of holding such an event in Cameroon*

-2016: peaceful protests by common law lawyers, then joined by teachers' associations, *expressing to the world the marginalization and frustration within the common law system; to which government and police responded forcefully*

-2018: aborted Anglophone General Conference, *which lacked sufficient groundwork and government consent to hold*

Points about Cameroon's History

Cameroon is a colonial construct. There was not a country with a geographical territory called Cameroon until after the Berlin Conference of 1884, when it became a German protectorate, *Kamerun*. In fact, the name was not even from the region. It derives from the Portuguese word for 'shrimp,' as the Portuguese had named the patch of land around Douala 'Shrimp river' (Rio dos Camarões). Thus the name 'Cameroon,' too, derives from colonialism.

Cameroon's boundaries have shifted through history. When Germany lost the First World War, Cameroon was divided into North and South, split between France and the United Kingdom. The *only* act of the people in Cameroon's history was the 1961 plebiscite leading to reunification of the Cameroons in a federalist system. Significantly, then, Anglophone Cameroonians are the *only* Cameroonians who chose to be part of Cameroon.

The ways in which questions are framed has great influence over outcomes. In plebiscites, what you are offered by a question, and the way that question is posed, legitimizes claims and how you imagine the way forward. This plebiscite had no option for independence, and is still referenced today as having restricted the people's will. Following the 1961 plebiscite, Cameroon became a federalist state, until 1972, when Cameroon became a unitary state.

Overall, our manner of speaking about Cameroon as a homogenous people or culture needs to recognize this colonial history. This country is an artificial construct from the colonial period.

A general phenomenon throughout Cameroon's history since 1961 is that the elites running the country have sought to further their own interests rather than serve the people. This is true for the entire country, not only for English-speaking Cameroon. There is widespread recognition that the governing elite does not serve the people. One participant stated that, to overcome this, Cameroonians need to move past fear and take on the establishment.

With regard to the 2016 protests that prompted this crisis, participants emphasized the peaceful nature of those actions, and the corresponding brutality with which the government and security forces responded. Regarding the 2018 Anglophone General Conference, participants said it failed to occur because the groundwork of wide coalitions of Anglophones was not done to enable the Conference.

Reflecting back on this workshop for peace, one participant stressed the need to remain holistic, as the Cameroonian government does not respect groups from outside Cameroon (claiming they have ‘other agendas’).

Two Tracks

Throughout the workshop, participants expressed an apparent friction between two tracks of challenges. Workshop participants saw Track One as the immediate humanitarian disaster Cameroon’s Anglophone regions are experiencing. Track Two was the deeper question about the country’s future—centring around the options of secession, federalism, and decentralization—that lurks within, above, and behind this crisis.

The key concern with Track Two was that, for many people, there is no shared vision for Cameroon for today or tomorrow. Even if this crisis’s violence and issues can be solved, we must consider the Cameroonian people in 20 years’ time from now. How can we build consensus around a vision for the future? Participants felt that this vision is crucial before even engaging in much advocacy work, as there is need for a single voice for peace, and a collective/shared sense of the people’s opinion behind you to gain traction with neighbouring countries, world powers, and the people themselves.

A longer-term vision was raised by participants who identified realities and questions such as: We can all agree to ‘stop violence immediately,’ but what comes beyond that? Even now, if the leader does not agree with stopping violence, what can be the next step? There is great diversity of opinion—even within separatist, federalist, and assimilation movements and options. It is necessary to imagine a process and consider the relevant actors, because if not well thought out, the path forward will have enormous ongoing costs.

At the same time, there is urgent business to which we must attend. People are being harmed and dying, and Cameroon’s human rights and humanitarian situations are grave. As one participant put it, “[t]here is concrete work that needs to be done while the bigger questions are also being asked.”

Workshop participants referred to these two tracks, directly or indirectly, throughout the workshop, but recognized that in this capacity—outside of Cameroon and with a subset of key people on a first gathering—our best approach was to focus on Track One while not dismissing Track Two. We must come up with concrete actions to deal with the atrocities, as small as this may seem in the scheme of these very big questions and problems. “Lofty ideas and concrete ideas—we need both.” Achieving concrete plans at the track one level is a good thing because we can work together and this work “needs to be done while the big questions are also being asked.” Indeed, “[d]isagreements on the larger questions should not derail the work on the ground. These questions will even allow the debates of the future.”

Elites, Leaders, and Regime vs. People and Country

Some participants dichotomized Cameroon's elites, leaders, and regime as separate from Cameroon the country and its people, and this recognition led to helpful insights.

On the government/elites/leaders/regime side, comments included:

“Government—the people that are in charge today—will destroy the federal system.”

“They are governing us now as if they are conquering us at war.”

“If it was tolerant, if it was people-sensitive, if it was democratic, Cameroon would not be where it is today.”

“This is an inclusive solution we are trying to look for... If we silence one, we may solve the war, but what happens 20 years from now? Are we looking for a solution or are we trying to silence them?”

The government's staunch stance on a unitary, decentralized state model was described by some participants as ‘assimilationist,’ a reference also to the French colonial practice of *assimilation*.

“Why are Cameroon's problems so difficult to fix?” asked one participant. This participant maintains that it comes back to leadership. Countries need leadership that respects human rights. In Cameroon's case, before a nation could be forged among the people several decades ago, the leaders emerged. There is a perception that these leaders forged the nation to suit themselves: Instead of working to serve the people, the leaders crafted a nation to serve the leaders.

On the people/country side, comments included:

“I don't hate the country. I can't hate the country, because if I do, once the regime changes, what am I left with?”

-Cameroonian people need to define common beliefs, what unites us, and what this country should be

-Cameroonian people have never had this opportunity

For one participant, the people must join together today to be ‘the voice.’ The old paradigm is that the leader is the country. The new paradigm should be that the people are the country. And people raising their voices can help affect this shift.

Another participant stressed the need to work together to succeed. This participant said, “I still believe in Cameroon.”

The Need for One Voice about Peace

One key question brought up at the workshop was: How do we build a synergy to walk together? “We are not walking together.” How do we channel our resources and put our ideas together so we can speak with one voice? We must talk to people on all sides and address these issues, one participant states. We need to talk to separatists. They are more than just ‘separatists.’ Other groups that have been affected by and involved in the crisis include religious groups, diaspora groups, ex-student groups, njangi groups, and others. They, too, must build synergy and combine resources. Change comes from people.

Participants drew on informative examples from other geographic locations. One participant referenced Eastern European history, and the way that the ‘single voice’ of diaspora groups in and from Eastern Europe who sought to engage the United States and seek North American Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. They found unity in seeking to join a ‘family of democracy’ that had one common message and goal. With this common goal, these Eastern European diaspora groups worked together, lobbied together, and educated each other. By speaking in one voice and accepting that each of their turns would come to join NATO, they were successful. There are many Cameroonian diaspora groups with great potential to affect change, but they are highly fragmented. Cameroonians could find a message to unite Cameroonian groups, and can then come together group by group.

Even just on the Anglophone side, there are no unifying leaders who can dialogue with the government. The diaspora says different things about any potential leaders. Participants recognized that if you have been to jail, you can say something, but it does not give you this dialogue position. The ‘Ambazonia’ leaders are in jail, but leadership needs to emerge and to unite Anglophones. Why are the Anglophone leaders not coming together? How can they be encouraged or forced to come together? People must keep asking these questions. Anglophones require opportunities to find common ground among themselves—to try to properly articulate what they want.

“To succeed as a people, there is a need to talk to each other and not across each other.” Even elected officials do not show up at meetings with each other and cannot talk with each other. The story is the same for Anglophone leaders, for civil society leaders. “If we do not work together, how can we forge unity in government and in people?”

The discussions also recognized that it is important for initiatives trying to move forward to focus on the ten current regions of Cameroon, both rural areas and urban centres. Focusing only on leading civil rights organizations and urban centres can lose trust in rural areas. Stigmatization and ethnic polarization are also factors fracturing Cameroonian society. Ideas that involve Cameroonian people nationwide to build common ideas of each other are essential. This can help to overcome the systematic exclusion, moving beyond individual to group interests—from relative to absolute gains. “If not, then the president will win the next election...and where are we again?”

Building Anglophone-Francophone Cooperation

Many participants urged that finding a solution for Cameroon will require more efforts for Francophone and Anglophone activists, civil society groups, and individuals to talk and work together. Some participants emphasized the importance of mutualism and sustainability in humanitarian work. These groups must channel their resources together and figure out how to boost one another based on their needs and outputs.

Participants recognized the difficulty of working together across language lines given the fractures in society. Trust is shaken and maybe even broken. Further, it is easy to be ignorant of the extent of the conflict: “Spending time in Yaounde does not expose you to the rest of the country,” and many people

in Yaounde or Douala do not understand what is happening in other areas. Central to creating space for this convergence will be getting into the mindsets of the Francophone majority. It is important that Francophone Cameroonians continue to be brought into the discussions and debates. Although it has been framed as the ‘Anglophone Problem’ by some, there appears to be increasing recognition that it is impacting the wider Cameroonian population.

Media

The Anglophone Crisis is highly underreported, participants agreed. Some expressed shock at the silence of the majority in Cameroon and the international community.

Some of this underreporting comes from auto-censorship of media personnel, who are being cautious about their reporting due to real risks. It is clear that journalists are not being protected. Systems are not in place to look after the personal safety or mental health of journalists. News organizations lack the resources to help their journalists, or sometimes even to send their journalists to the relevant areas to report. Journalists struggle to target the right sources and get information.

Other elements of this underreporting come from control over the media. Some media outlets prominently state that there is no Anglophone Problem.

There are approximately six million Facebook and Internet users in Cameroon. There is much information put out on social media (especially WhatsApp, Facebook, and email) regarding the crisis, but this information faces issues such as fake news. It is often difficult to confirm the veracity of information on social media, and there is great mistrust of information and sources. Perhaps accessing and empowering local journalists can help to cut across the noise on social media.

As noted previously, sensitive information about events may be passed from person to person until someone disconnected from the event in question can safely post it. If you bring incriminating information to higher-ups, such as military commanders, for accountability purposes, you are at risk.

The power of the media is immense. The media has influence on people’s visions and perspectives, and on the language that gets disseminated into people’s minds. Media members who are of elite status can get away with using inflammatory language with impunity, and examples were shared during the workshop. In some ways, therefore, the power of media may be greater than that of the military.

Media has played a role in escalating the conflict. Some media outlets have used problematic hate speech, referring to a need to “sweep the place,” calling Anglophones “enemies in the house,” saying “you can go back to where you belong,” and using dehumanizing terms such as “cockroaches” or “dogs,” even in referring to traditional authorities. Hate speech leads to hate action. Workshop participants drew parallels with Rwandan radio and Nazi propaganda in emphasizing the severity of this problem, and the roles that unchecked hate speech has in escalating violence.

Because of media censorship, Cameroonian people—especially youth—lack alternative voices. When the messages this limited media puts out are those of denial and hatred, it significantly worsens the problems, especially for the younger generation because they do not have lived experience of other options.

Instead, workshop participants emphasized that media should be encouraged to publish messages of respect of others, respect of humanity, and respect in diversity. Journalists must report on civilian populations and stand as the voice for weaker parties caught up in the Anglophone Crisis. Media can help sensitize fighters and those committing atrocities to the consequences of being prosecuted. It is crucial to let the government know that journalists are standing in the middle of the conflict and are not on anyone's side. The role of media is to explain the situation to all parties and 'school' people on what the real issues are.

The media must also highlight that this level of violence is not normal, should not be tolerated, and can be seen as a precursor to more violence. As one participant intimated, “[i]t is not normal to lose 28 people in your family. It is not normal to call people cockroaches.” Media has a central role to play in reinforcing this message.

The Power of Narratives

Another central theme arising from the workshop is the power of narratives and real stories in times of conflict. Narratives and ways of framing information, events, and trends can inspire change among people. Current narratives in this conflict, as explored above, deny the Anglophone Problem, exclude population segments, and entrench societal divisions.

Many workshop participants stressed the need to provide different narratives in this conflict. Storytelling is a powerful tool to empower change through new narratives that resonate with people's needs, and is part of African tradition. Because of this power, storytelling has a place for increasing awareness around the world, and can be used in Cameroon.

Some ideas for new narratives include:

- Taking pride in being Cameroonian
 - looking for opportunities for citizenship
 - viewing bilingualism as a strength — because it is “different from so many countries in Africa”
- Building unity
 - aiming initiatives across the nation, trying to build common ideas of people as people (not as stereotypes)
 - invoking family metaphors — as one participant said: “Knowing how we are in African families, we can only estimate how many people are...suffering under the current crisis.” These sorts of family metaphors can be helpfully invoked to urge unity and non-violence
- Devaluing 'winning' the crisis
 - putting out the message that “even if you 'win' you will pay a price”

Importantly, videos and images of violence can radicalize people. For example, such videos can inspire people to take ‘revenge’ or to fulfil cultural expectations of defending their villages and people. It is helpful to discourage people from sharing such messages, especially without commentary for other interpretations. Instead, videos and images of how people respond to violence with actions for nonviolence and peace could accompany these new narratives.

New narratives can be effectively spread via media, especially social media and community radio. Podcasts may also be helpful media for such alternative narratives.

Traditional Aspects

This crisis has many traditional and cultural aspects, and we must ensure that the traditional components of culture and power are part of all discussions. Traditional cultural elements in Cameroon are relatable to people and can be mobilized in working for peace.

Some traditional elements mentioned during the workshop:

- traditional authorities, e.g. the declaration in the South West that they should march on May 20
- traditional power in Yaounde (small group of traditional leaders with great power there)
- traditional power that President Biya wields
- traditional charms and medicines that deter the military from attacking Amba areas
- traditional social groups, e.g. njangi groups and cultural groups as potential networks for peace

Diaspora

There are many Cameroonian diaspora groups across the world. In Canada alone, there are approximately 400 diaspora groups with 10-500 participants in each. There are still more Cameroonians in Canada who are not members of these groups. In the United States and Europe, the numbers are higher. These large numbers make the diaspora powerful, in influencing structure and system, and this can be harnessed with a united message.

This influence was exemplified by Eastern European diasporas working together for absolute gains and a single goal: gaining NATO membership through concerted engagement with the United States. Cameroonian diasporas must speak with one voice for peace, and work with one another for engagement and enlargement. One message can unite Cameroonian groups and bring them together to rise for change.

At the same time, participants noted the difficulty of generating this common action, not only in finding a unifying message but also in creating trust and security. Diaspora members will come out in the hundreds for social events, one participant said, but almost no one will show up to peaceful protests. There is great mistrust of others and fear that voicing any political statements will have ramifications, especially for family members back in Cameroon. People worry that secret government allies will report their actions and advocacy. “Trust and safety remain a big problem.”

Youth

“Young Cameroonians need to understand our own history. We don’t know it, we have not been taught,” said a young participant at the workshop. Looking to Cameroon’s future, participants urged that youth are crucial. “The kids who have picked up the guns are the ones who are not going to school. We have to get them to realize that this is not their future.” Participants expressed that youth require (a) exposure to alternative, non-violent voices, and (b) understandings of the country’s history, so that conflict of this sort can be avoided in the future. “In five to ten years, this is theirs only.”

Indeed, the ways in which youth have been coopted and channelled into violence formed parts of workshop discussions. Many youths have been forced to join separatist groups. Other youths have chosen to fight, especially those who have lost parents or family members in military attacks. One participant believes that the privilege of youth is to dream, but Cameroonian youth do not have that privilege. Cameroonian youth must be prioritized and brought into conversations about the conflict and the future. Boys and young men are often the focus of discussions about youth in the crisis; participants noted that girls and young women also need to be included in these conversations.

Education

Accordingly, some workshop discussions focused on how to reinstate education for children, whether by reopening schools or instituting homeschooling in some form.

The school boycotts were initially intended to be a temporary measure of protest for a limited time period only. They have extended into three years in some parts. Now, hundreds of thousands of children are unable to go to school. Schools have been closed, schools have been burned, and kidnappings have taken place at public schools and private boarding schools.

Across both North West and South West regions, students are not going to school, except in a few areas of privilege. As a result of violence and school closures, those who have the means are moving to new, safer areas. The wealthy are less affected by what is happening and the poor suffer. “Areas are now deserted. In Douala, classes are full or overflowing because of displaced students from the conflict regions.”

According to some participants, the government believes that kids not going to school hurts the Anglophone community, but the government needs to realize that the effect of children not going to school is that they become recruited for separatist movements. Separatist groups maintain that other armed groups have been perpetrating school kidnappings. According to one participant, the government wants to demonstrate its strength, the separatists want to win and continuously violate human rights, and armed groups who do not belong to the government or to the separatists perpetrate violence. Regardless of the source, “it is the children who suffer.” Another participant stated that every parent wants to send their children back to school, but under these conditions of insecurity and violence, it is simply not safe enough for parents to risk their children’s lives.

For one participant, this conflict has led the Anglophone regions to lose one of their prime advantages and exports: education. Francophone students used to study in Anglophone schools because of their quality of education, but now Anglophone students who can escape the regions are studying in Francophone schools. This reversal serves to, contrary to the school boycott's intentions, further 'Francophonize' the Anglophone population.

Workshop participants agreed that school is highly important. Children who are out of school can be those becoming radicalized and picking up guns if they are not presented with alternative futures. Children who have been kidnapped are traumatized. One participant recalled the voice of a young girl saying "I want to go to school." Parents and guardians are highly stressed in trying to educate their children and keep them out of violent paths. Education is crucial for the future of the country and the conflict, as today's youth may soon be holding the reins of power.

"If we believe that the crisis has to be resolved before the children can go to school, we'll have to wait a decade or more. In the meantime, Anglophone kids are suffering and the government is showing the Anglophone community disdain." What can be done for now?

The media has a significant role to play with regard to education. As described, the media has power to inspire visions, language, and framing among the population. As of now, Francophone media has been reporting about the school boycotts; however, it reports that parents are preventing their children from going to school. "There is considerable misinformation about what is happening. The situation with abandoned schools and schools burned to the ground is not being reported."

Participants suggested that media's role can be to 'school' people on what the real issues are. Specifically, media should talk about the immense consequences of hundreds of thousands of children being unable to go to school. One key challenge for journalists is on-the-ground access. Journalists must work hard to seek access to relevant areas, pay attention to what is happening on the ground, and get the messages out. Media and communications experts must also speak to separatists about the school boycotts. We cannot guarantee the safety of children returning to school without talking to the separatists, both on the ground and outside the country. Media can also inform the international community about the school boycott and its negative effects.

Fundamentally, the media can try to change the narrative. It can encourage students to go back to school in areas where it is safe. "It doesn't need everyone to go back to school at the same time. We don't have to wait for this." In the current climate, the warring parties' positions are dug in. We must be more creative in putting forth this narrative, especially on the separatist side, to say it would be beneficial for the separatists if children go back to school. It is important not to demonize the separatists any further. Diplomacy can help ensure that separatist groups do not feel that schools reopening signal they have been vanquished. "If the fighters are pushed to the wall, they will push back harder." Instead, we should encourage deal-making among Anglophones for schools to reopen, then carve out space for credible interlocutors with the government. It is important to work with teachers' organizations and parents in these endeavours. "Those who called for school boycotts should now call for back to school."

One participant urged that this dialogue must take place on both sides. “Following boycotts, the government said that they would provide protection. But there are daily reports of gunshots near school campuses. Is a military presence on the ground able to provide protection? Gun battles are between the military and the pro-independence fighters.” Thus, efforts to restore education must engage both sides to prevent the violence and insecurity keeping parents from sending their children to school. It is also good to include voices from non-governmental organizations in these discussions, one participant adds.

Another participant suggested that schools associated with religious groups may be helpful starting points. First, these schools are without political orientation because of their religious leanings. Second, they may garner more international and national attention. Third, religious voices both inside and outside the country are powerful.

Participants also mentioned homeschooling as an alternative to reopening schools.

International World & Advocacy

Mentions of the international world were common at the workshop. European powers shaped much of Cameroonian history and continue to have relations with Cameroon today. Other world powers and countries are also involved in Cameroon, politically and economically. There exist international bodies that can condemn violence in Cameroon, put pressure on government for dialogue, and even intervene in the country. Some workshop discussions focused around the potential for, and types of, advocacy that would generate international attention and action.

Advocacy can occur at different levels and within different sectors. On Day One, some participants identified three key sectors for advocacy: political groups, corporate alliances, and key individuals. On the second day, they expanded these ideas into six areas for advocacy that may specifically help diminish the crisis:

- (1) advocacy Cameroonians can do from home, within Cameroon (may spread beyond country borders)
- (2) advocacy with former African leaders who have stepped down
- (3) advocacy with the Cameroonian diaspora
- (4) advocacy with Canadian leaders and influential figures (e.g. General Roméo Dallaire)
- (5) advocacy with Canadian and other corporations involved in Cameroon
- (6) advocacy with government policy-makers in Canada, the United States, European countries, etc.

Some international organizations who may be beneficial allies in pressing for peace in Cameroon include the International Criminal Court, the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. Key countries with interest in Cameroon include the United States, France, Nigeria, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Individuals to target on advocacy may include universities and academics, celebrities, and artists.

In general terms, using prominent individuals with informal relations is a helpful course of action. Behind-the-curtain work can be beneficial for influencing governments to take alternative stances on the situation and put pressure in key places. Individual and everyday advocacy can be important, but individuals may be vulnerable and scared, and key prominent people (e.g. retired members of international courts) have many keys in their hands.

Through all of this, it is important to have a single, unified voice for peace to ensure advocacy is effective. For example, Ukrainian movements used public opinion surveys to create a single document which all advocates used in their meetings and in talking to ministers. This may be replicable in some ways in Cameroon's case.

Internationally, there is crisis fatigue. There are too many crises worldwide that are also serious and pressing. Successful advocacy to the international world must define its target audience, use strategic champions in the political sector, private sector, and entertainment industry, place effort on back-door efforts to identify and target those actors who “really have a say,” and employ opinion pieces and personal stories to capture attention from these actors and the media.

Of course, successful advocacy begs the question, “If the international community gets involved, how can we ensure Cameroonians have space to be the experts?” This question was posed but unanswered at the workshop. What is clear is the need to be mindful of the role and perception of history and colonial power throughout these endeavours.

Systems Mapping and Systems Thinking

This workshop relied on ‘systems mapping’ on Day One to generate a design and diagram for building a shared picture of the situation. We used a ‘rich picture’ approach to avoid imposing a particular structure and allow representation of diverse world views within one diagram. As the basis for this diagram, our systems mapper used the analogy of a three-legged stool. One leg stood for Cameroon's past—the country's history and makeup—one leg for the present—human rights violations and conflict—and one leg for the future—possible truth, justice, and reconciliation. As depicted in the systems map image on the cover of this report, we identified different actors in the core and periphery of this conflict and illustrated polarities of the key tensions underlying the conflict.

Participants also considered systems thinking as a useful tool for engaging in sustainable, mutualistic humanitarian work. Systems thinking believes that a structure determines behaviour; the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Thus, systems thinking allows us to deal with complex problems by looking at the deep structure. Experts and top-down approaches lack the necessary knowledge to understand problems at hand, because they are too complex. We must use the structure to discover what is embedded in the crisis—its root cause. And working on the root cause, rather than the symptoms, may lead to better results.

Systems thinking encourages holistic views of problems. While each individual thinks his or her own view is the truth, all visions may be complementary. By looking at the bigger picture, we can get closer

to the truth. We may use events, behaviour patterns, structures, mental models, and visions of desired futures to interrogate these problems. Use of systems thinking may encourage trust, dialogue, and reciprocity through its creation of shared understandings and values—dialogue helps to find common ground and finding solutions is a collective enterprise. Practically, systems thinking suggests that mapping local organizations already working on similar endeavours is highly useful for allocating resources effectively and working mutualistically—allowing each group’s outputs and needs to fit with others’ needs and outputs.

The participants who represented systems thinking said simply that “the reconstruction of Cameroon will take place in a disintegrating world.” Having awareness of underlying structures, systems, root causes, and bigger pictures—and seeking convergence through dialogue, mutualism, and trust—will be crucial components of any sustainable humanitarian efforts to rebuild.

Examples Mentioned from Other Conflicts

- Eastern European experience with using a single message from the diaspora to engage US and NATO
- Ukrainian public opinion surveys to create single summary document and put pressure from all advocates using the same document
- mapping local organizations to increase synergy and efficacy practiced in work with women in Liberia
- SWAT analysis useful for doing risk assessments before projects
- parallels to Rwanda and Nazi Germany in terms of hate speech being used
- parallels to Rwanda in terms of dehumanizing language (‘cockroaches’) and house burnings

Other Key Points

No Single Way Forward

This workshop did not intend to advocate for a single way forward on track two—the Anglophone Problem and question of decentralization-federalism-separation. As mentioned previously, even within these three options, there is diversity within Cameroonians’ opinions. What workshop attendees could agree on was that violence must diminish, civilians must be protected, and groundwork for justice, reconciliation, and peace must begin.

As one organizer explained, “the intention is not to have one single way forward. The intent is to bring people together and understand different ways forward. We have now explored in more detail the different options.” We identified a variety of track one actions to diminish violence and help fill immediate needs, and we also considered—although did not reach consensus on—some options for addressing track two, the deeper questions, moving forward.

We All Have a Role To Play

This conflict is really happening. It is not just a Cameroonian problem but a human responsibility. “We think we can take a step back when we are not Cameroonian, but really we can’t.”

We have a responsibility to:

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- not accept what we are hearing and seeing as ‘normal’
 - prioritize and focus on actions that can have the most impact
 - accept that actions cannot be taken on some fronts
 - work together and combine resources
 - remain sensitive to issues of security and safety moving forward

Broadly, some key areas the workshop identified where actions now can make a difference include: **accountability, advocacy, documentation of what is happening, building synergy among humanitarian groups, changing the narrative, promoting unity, speaking about education, and considering the traditional side in all efforts.**

The needs identified that underly these key areas include:

- the need to speak to the atrocities—to refute the perception that nobody is listening
 - the need for justice and accountability
 - the need for moral and psychological reconciliation and social justice
 - the need to invoke international laws and consequences of their violation
 - the need to reestablish shared understanding of the history and root of these problems
 - the need to establish truth, facts, and responsibilities so that history does not repeat itself
 - the need to document what is happening to reduce the behaviour in the future
 - the need for increased awareness of ‘crimes against humanity’ and prosecution to stop perpetrators
 - the need to teach people about their rights
 - the need for peace education
 - the need to include youth
 - the need to get children access to education
 - the need to find new leaders
 - the need to foster trust among people
 - the need to use the power of narratives to inspire change
 - the need to create citizenship and pride in being Cameroonian
 - the need to enshrine respect of others, of humanity, of diversity
 - the need to use leverage over the Cameroonian government
 - the need for international attention and pressure
 - the need to balance demands among multiple different constituencies
 - the need for better communication and dialogue among actors
 - the need to identify gaps in civil society and build synergy and collaboration (to avoid duplication)
 - the need for better coordinated, more sustainable humanitarian aid
 - the need for better training for health workers on identification and treatment
 - the need to aggregate and multitask to remain relevant
 - the need to be mindful of the role and perception of history and colonialism within these endeavours
- We all have a role that we can and should play in addressing these needs.***

IDEAS FOR ACTIONS FOR CAMEROON'S FUTURE

Although the workshop did not aim to generate consensus on any one path forward, the following list includes ideas mentioned or described during the workshop that could address some grievances and form part of a path forward. The workshop is not advocating for any one of them, but it is important to record them for Cameroonian people to keep in mind for the future:

- National, inclusive dialogue
- All-Anglophone conference in Cameroon, followed by a national conference and dialogue in Cameroon
 - this would give Anglophones an opportunity to articulate their wishes and select leaders for broader dialogue
 - then Anglophones and the government could come together for dialogue
- Anglophone referendum
 - options may include separation, federalism, and decentralization
 - this would give Anglophones a voice in their options in a way the 1961 plebiscite did not
- 3-step process for justice and cessation of hostilities
 - (1) international and independent fact-finding mission
 - (2) ceasefire agreement by all actors
 - (3) adoption of resolution, including a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission
 - including reconciliation framework between people, institutions, and security forces
 - followed by consolidation of democratic institutions and rule of law, and protection of civil society
- More options for Cameroon's future — e.g. a 'Third Way' between government and separatist polarities
 - this can help reframe loaded narratives around terms such as 'federalism'
- Official dialogue to reestablish Cameroon's history and the root causes of this conflict
- Rotation between Francophone and Anglophone presidents of Cameroon
- Mandatory inclusion of Anglophone candidates in all political parties
- Immediate and unconditional release of anyone arrested as a result of the crisis
- Rebuilding burned villages and compensation for all people who lost property
 - could include a 'Dream Home' project to build trust among refugees and internally displaced persons to allow them to return to their former villages

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- General amnesty for all members of the Cameroonian diaspora who cannot presently return to Cameroon
 - Commission on social equality
 - this could replace the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism
 - Cameroon's Constitution should reign above the National Commission
 - Policy ensuring that all primary school teachers are bilingual
 - Expanded educational curriculum including Anglophone values and local languages
 - enshrining *multilingualism*, not just bilingualism
 - Rehabilitation programs for youth in North West Region and South West Region
 - Assistance from the international community in controlling Cameroon's armed forces

FEEDBACK AND FUTURE

Feedback from Participants at and after the Workshop

Feedback for the workshop was generally positive, with some excellent points of constructive criticism. Here we present some examples of comments.

“I think this is a step in the right direction, but we also need to talk to the separatists.”

“This workshop is so timely, we needed this to motivate us. This is important and we need to impact these lives...I am happy to have met everyone at this workshop.”

“If I die tomorrow it will be all right because I tried to make it better.”

“The workshop is a good starting point. We got conversations going, ideas cross-pollinating and action plans drafted. Who is part of the organizers is a critical element to be thought of. What types of methodologies are employed could source from different facilitation styles and proper care should be put in this. Cultural relevance of food is key! The video integration was a wonderful success, congratulations.”

“Great template for future gatherings on the conflict except that in the future, it’s good to give some consideration to the culture of the attendees when it comes to food and providing a space for people to freely express themselves.”

“It seems like it was pretty successful. If we could get some people who were in attendance to reflect and contribute to writing ideas down, it might be very helpful to develop a Planning Guide or facilitators’ Manual for future events.”

“It was open and rich. I think that it is the way to find acceptable solutions to this crisis.”

“First let’s see if there are results the workshop produces.”

“Next time, it’s better to build a framework where people do all the brainstorming on the first day and just build up on ideas on the second day without going back and forth. If new ideas come up eventually, it can be written as follow up points for next time. Lots of energy and time was wasted going back and forth which could have been used to further develop ideas of Day One and to pin reasonable and well thought action plans.”

Would this workshop make a good template for future events on this conflict or others? Of the 7 responses to this question: 6 yes, 1 no.

Commitments Made by Participants at the End of the Workshop

- to use outcomes of this workshop to try and help victims on the ground with concrete relief measures
- to help displaced persons survive
- to build peace on the ground and in the field
- to raise the profile of what is happening in Cameroon
- to continue to communicate and engage with key institutions
- to work together with all Cameroonians to resolve these problems
- to facilitate respectful and compassionate treatment of girls, women, and disabled people
- to get the word out about Cameroon to the Canadian populace and politicians
- to report on Cameroon through a network of journalists

Moving Forward

Following the workshop, some participants are continuing to communicate and collaborate on actions and projects brainstormed during the three days, with monthly or weekly e-meetings. The group going forward is restricted to people who attended the workshop, because we built trust and understanding over the course of the three days that people who did not attend the workshop would lack. In the future, we will, as a group, consider holding a follow-up workshop, if necessary.

This plan and idea may be replicable in other situations, for Cameroon and other conflicts. Some participants expressed interest in holding similar workshops for Cameroon across North America.

Thank You

We had wonderful volunteers assisting throughout the workshop. Thank you very much for your time and effort.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATE

Here is a template developed at the workshop that can allow all these ideas to follow a similar format - a strategy or format to communicate vision to the people:

1. Vision
 - any solution comes from a vision
2. Risk Assessment
 - who are the stakeholders?
 - friendly groups and actors that can help us to achieve the vision?
 - who are the organizations, individual that may oppose this? —understand your opponents
 - get many perspectives when identifying players
 - can be supplemented by SWAT analysis model
3. Target Audience
 - there is a unique target for every vision
 - e.g. social media users, women, children, academics, etc.
 - once you know the target audience the tools you should use will be more apparent
4. Tools/Methods
 - e.g. media, pamphlets, radio, face-to-face, etc.
 - tools will depend on your vision and target audience
5. Implementation
 - steps to take to achieve the action
 - at each step, consider your ultimate goal
6. Evaluation
 - what did you learn?
 - reassessment of points 1-5
 - reflection on what happened and how to improve

ACTION ITEMS IDENTIFIED

These are the actions that some participants agreed to work on. Each of these action items has a different timeline and contains different complexities. We hope to fulfil these action items within one year.

Communication Strategy

Need: for a consistent way to present information about the crisis and to plan initiatives

Goal: to help get messages across

Coordination of Actors Working on the Ground

Need: for better knowledge of on-the-ground initiatives and their complementarity

Goal: to establish coordination and synergy among groups working on the ground

Database of Atrocities

Need: for a central, secure space to store data on atrocities committed during the crisis

Goal: to have a one-stop-shop for evidence on human rights violations in Cameroon

Education on War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity during the Conflict

Need: for reduction of overall levels of violence and education about potential prosecution

Goal: to educate warring parties on war crimes and crimes against humanity

Inter-Community Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation

Need: for community dialogue to prepare for a peace, justice, and reconciliation commission

Goal: to mobilize existing societal groups to begin dialoguing on peace and reconciliation

North American Force Multipliers for Cameroon

Need: for increased awareness of the conflict in North America, generating political responses

Goal: to target influential North American actors and encourage them to spread the word

Our Education, Our Future

Need: for safe ways to get children education so they can have proper futures

Goal: to get children back in school or substitution schools

Podcast and/or Community Radio

Need: for promotion of messages of peace at the ground level

Goal: to use radio and storytelling to spread messages of bilingual respect and non-violence

Supporting Health Care Workers in Addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and Malnutrition in North West and South West Regions

Need: for awareness and responses to SGBV and malnutrition

Goal: to support health care workers with sensitization, training, and resources

We Need Peace Dance

Need: for a sense of togetherness in non-violent forms of protest

Goal: to start a viral YouTube trend of dancing for peace, using song produced by Cameroonian musicians