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State–Civil Society Relations



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Political Leadership, State–Civil Society Relations and the Search for Development Alternatives

John W. Forje

Introduction

At the dawn of a new millennium and descending from the hills of the lost decades for socio-economic transformation, all significant actors in the development process have converged on a new agenda – the role of civil society as a serious partner in the transformation of the society. Developing countries, Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, continue to struggle to identify developmental options, implement feasible growth strategies, and overcome persistent poverty and domestic social inequality. Industrialised countries, in turn, are beginning to realise that current consumption patterns are a liability in maintaining basic domestic standards of social equity, social security, and human development. Internationally, there is an increasing lack of control over future market directions, global trade, the capacity of countries and regions to sustain achieved levels of economic growth, and the rapid social impact of science and information technologies. That corruption, poor governance and underdevelopment combine to wreck Cameroon, is self-evident.

The general atmosphere that pervades today's Cameroon is that of uncertainty and misery. Pessimism, disappointment and total despair now take the place of the euphoria of the immediate post-independent and reunification era. The problem facing the continent is 'man-made' and requires concrete solutions from within and outside Africa. Many states have literally collapsed. More are daily being packaged for destruction, Cameroon included, because of its inertia and the attitude of recycling the political class. Cameroon now presents the gloomy picture of a corrupt nation that stands aloof from the problems of the continent. In short, it is an absentee country as far as African issues are concerned. This

development raises the question: What is the way out? Very germane in today's Cameroon is the state of the devaluation of human beings. Let us start by recognising the present crisis in Cameroon for what it is: a crisis of leadership and development. Let me also grant that because it is a crisis of leadership and development, the problem is necessarily multi-dimensional. It is therefore political as well as economic. It is equally socio-cultural as well as moral. While it is also a product of Cameroon's chequered history, the contemporary Cameroonian environment largely shapes its present manifestations, globally and locally. To attribute the problems to external causes alone is to shy away from the problems. Rising frustration and despair have gripped the people and pushed them into a perpetual state of coma and inaction – a veritable state of 'inertia'.¹ Underneath that 'inertia' is a burning desire for 'greater achievements or ambition'² embedded in every Cameroonian. How to convert rising frustration into a realised ambition is the question. An authentic Cameroon 'glasnost and Perestroika' is needed to give the required dynamism and sense of direction for the emergence of a new society.

Cameroon stands the risk of disintegrating. The present ethnic patronage-dependent government-oriented relationship holds the country to ransom. Some ethnic groups have taken advantage of the existing state system to lord over other groups. This hostage taking or hijacking attitude bleeds the country dry. These developments not only undermine the pre-existing cultural models but also use them in a competitive divide and rule governance framework, which entrenches exclusion based on the conflict of ethnic identities. Of course, conflicts did exist in the pre-colonial setting, but the models used to resolve them were largely successful. The pre-colonial cultural institutions had a better record in managing cultural diversity and fostering nationhood when compared to existing governance models. Pre-colonial cultural institutions and patterns tended to favour inclusion as opposed to exclusion. Elements of exclusion were counterbalanced by elements of inclusion in which the individual always felt connected to a wider community. This is not the case today. Pre-existing indigenous processes and practices for creating unity and harmony among groups have been replaced by the centralised authoritarian and militaristic rule of the post-colonial state, whose public policy framework emphasises division and exclusion.

Independence was intended to provide an opportunity for a new governance form, to reverse whatever exclusionary public policy framework of the colonial state, and to make it more attuned to the cultural patterns of the new integrated nation; but that has proved elusive as ethnic hegemony has hijacked state institutions and confiscated state property as personal goods. So bad is the situation that ethnic hegemony has desecrated civic freedoms, rights and other instruments and today these fundamental tenets of democracy remain cosmetic. The result is that Cameroon has a constitution without constitutionalism and elections without democracy. The struggle among the various ethnic groups and sects over power,

elections, government services and development opportunities, has further entrenched the politics of exclusion that greatly weakens the state internally and externally.

To compete in an increasingly knowledge-based interconnected world economy, Cameroon must improve its governance system, international competitiveness, adapt to rapid technological change and accommodate its production system to both external and domestic demands. It is a challenging process which the state cannot handle alone. Comprehensive and concerted partnership and participation are required from other key stake holders, civil society and the private sector. Instead, social safety nets are weakened, and social-sector reforms have been insufficient to strengthen these systems, due to the hegemonic attitude of the ruling class. The outcome is that available resources have been shifted away from social programmes and responsibility for the social well-being of the people is transferred from the state to the private accounts or to private sectors controlled and owned by the ruling elites, and profits are not ploughed back to address pertinent problems of the suffering majority. The effect of these changes is that greater responsibility for survival is placed on the shoulders of the poor and the communities in which they participate.

The holy (or is it unholy?) marriage between the state, ruling elite and some segments of the civil society in the early part of the post-independence era ironically took away the inalienable rights of the custodians of power in making choices on issues that best enhanced and harnessed their potential for mapping the proper road to the sustainable development. The alienation of radical segments of civil society saw the start of ‘things falling apart’. There is now a new re-awakening and re-linking between state and civil society in addressing the needs of the people. The search for development alternatives assumes a central place in the emerging agenda of Cameroon in the twenty-first century.

In this framework, the challenges for social development and poverty reduction are seen as those of the availability rather than the redistribution of resources. Policy reforms are required and expected to maximize the use of resource - ‘doing more with less’. The overarching issue of cultural orientation still needs to be addressed. The character of the new social ethos that should guide reforms must be geared towards a human-oriented development approach. This is an ethos that is increasingly determined by cultural values. Therefore, policy changes at the macro- and micro-levels ought to be promoted as good and desirable with one spirit directing the approach - ‘human-oriented, human-faced’ - and the people making the decisions in the process. Development so conceived is not to be taken as a synonym for economic growth although sometimes the line of symmetry here could be rather thin. Current development efforts could result in a qualitative increase or decrease in certain indicators, in inequality among the people, more or less marginalisation, or more democratic or authoritarian political regimes. Viewed this way, one point becomes paramount which is that development

cannot 'be achieved by proxy' (Osia 1987:37). It is a process in which the people pursue objectives set by themselves and in their own interest and with their own resources (cf. Aragon's [1995] concept of autonomy). It is a tall order; and calls for astute leadership backed by positive responses from civil society and the private sector without, of course, excluding the role of the international community.

Making choices by the people implies a search for development alternatives for the common good. More than half a century of independence, of state intervention through a 'top-down' development approach have failed to meet the basic human needs of the people. Rising expectations only converged on destructive frustration, alienation, apathy, abject poverty and despair. In a way, inappropriate independence and failed policies ushered in affluence only for a few. Neo-colonialism replaced nationalism, while patronage, ethnicity, corruption, and clientelism overtook unity, nationalism, coherence, social justice, and inclusion. In the same vein, it also destroyed a national sense of belonging. Development cannot be sustainable when people feel they are strangers in their own country, and when the state adopts a discriminatory, victimising and punitive approach.

Civil society and the 'bottom-up' approach were removed from development, planning, formulation, implementation and execution of socio-economic related transformation as far back as the period of central state-driven planning of the three development decades (1960-1990). The majority of the people seem worse off today than before independence largely due to the politics of exclusion, social injustice, the absence of the rule of law, and divide and rule tactics that lead to the inappropriate utilisation of human and natural resource potentials. Of course, pockets of development have been achieved during the past four decades of independence although more could have been done if only state and radical civil society had not parted ways. The importance and role of civil society and the search for new development alternatives remain imperative for a country endowed with human and natural resources potential but with the vast majority of the population living in squalor and abject poverty. The country can only claim the twenty-first century when added value is given to its human and natural resources. In order to be part of the evolution under the canopy of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the unstoppable forces of globalisation, the Cameroon state and people must rethink, reconstruct, and reconstitute the state and society as inalienable partners in development.

In short, a new development approach, one of inclusion – 'bottom-up' – involving all stakeholders can no longer be overlooked. The search and implementation of a new road map for sustainable development must not continue to be absent from the country. Many questions abound as to why development eludes Cameroon and its people. Apparently, it is evident that there is a failure of the conventional thinking and approaches so far adopted. Furthermore, those who pilot statecraft are totally detached from the predicament of the people, as

government and other actors impose development, whether conceptualised as altruistic or exploitative. Knowledge of and links with recipients is often minimal. David Pitt (1976) indicates that the social distance between development planners and beneficiaries of development projects usually means that nothing is achieved.

What needs to be done to accelerate economic and technological growth and progress? To promote economic and social development and to reverse environmental degradation, crime, corruption, insecurity and other ills that have befallen the country, a new vision or road map needs to be articulated and aggregated. A new *modus operandi* for both the public and private sectors is needed to move the country forward. That road map must be constructed through the trinity of partnership, participation and responsibility sharing among the key players - state, civil society and the private sector.

Given the complexity of the cultural and strategic poles entangled with the issue in question, we should be realistic enough to admit that the problem requires a yet to be constructed political surgical theatre and a team of political surgeons yet to be trained to undertake the political operation in order to reconstruct the one and indivisible political landscape of Cameroon. Whether you adopt a Leviathan or Clausewitzian, a cultural or a strategic pole approach, the bottom line here is simply that of the ‘politics of inclusion and exclusion’. Once people have been pushed to the margin, it is unlikely that any significant changes can result in terms of development. The moment now seems opportune. There is general consensus across a wide spectrum of opinion, institutions and scholars that development is essentially people-centred, ‘the involvement and commitment to aspired living standards and not the amount of infrastructure that a society possesses’ (Kiawi & Mfoulou 2002).

This article seeks to examine and address numerous questions related to the economic, political, technological and social transformation of society. The idea is to give renewed attention and focus to issues of ‘inclusion, partnership, participation, responsibility and benefit sharing’ in the development process. Thus, the focus of the study is also on policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The aim is to shed some light on the failures and imbalances in government policy strategies, in its human capital resource development, and its social and development policies. State-civil society interaction is treated as vital to the creation of the necessary enabling environment for sustainable development and quality livelihood for the majority of the people.

Common Challenges for the State and Civil Society in Cameroon

With the transition from the colonial to post-colonial administration, social policy took on completely different functions and objectives. It became a means of legitimising the new regimes constructed by the African nationalist rulers of weak and fragmented post-colonial states. Two distinctive overlapping phases can be distinguished. The first is the early post-colonial period or the constructionist

phase. The second is the crisis phase, which began in the mid-1970s and became evident and protracted in the decade of the 1980s. The 'constructionist' phase was one of consolidation and expansion of the neo-colonial accumulation model that characterised the development paths of many African political economies (Mbaya 1995). Coupled with this model was the legitimation strategy of the populist programmes of the nationalist movements that came to power after independence (Mkandawire 1995). Central to the legitimation strategy was a strong social policy tied to an essentially constructionist ideal of economic development, that is, building physical, social, and human infrastructures. This was also a period of 'constructing' major social programmes in education, housing, health, urban planning, and elaborate social subsidies, matched with the construction of new physical signs of nationhood – airports, five star hotels, expensive cars, elite residential estates, parliament buildings and government offices (Morales-Gomez 1999).

The policies and politics of 'indirect rule' (British Cameroons) and 'assimilation' (French Cameroons) respectively practised in the colonial entities piloted civil society in different directions. While civil society in Anglophone Cameroon has tended to play the role of participation in the manner of responsible partnership in the tradition of indirect rule (Temngah on trade unionism in this volume, Yenshu Vubo 1998, Chole 1991, Jinadu 1990, Mohammed 1991, Osei-Hwedie 1990), civil society in Francophone Cameroon has rather either acquiesced with the state or adopted a radical and often violent protest approach in the tradition of the Union Populations du Cameroun (UPC). Of recent, a most vocal civil society movement has arisen in the Anglophone territory and has been instrumental in advocating changes in the country. In all cases, it is the response to the state - whether colonial or post-colonial - that largely determines the emergence of these movements. In the one case the colonial regime's attitude led to improvement unions as in the British-administered territories, and in the other repressive French colonial policies led to a radical civil society. Judging from the first stage as earlier outlined, social policy and development were thus selective, discriminatory, and exclusionary, geared to protecting and advancing colonial interests (Patel 1992). The neglected majorities were forced to fend for themselves as there was a largely indifferent attitude towards grassroots initiatives. This brief journey through the evolution and development of civil society gives a bird's eye perspective of the 'actually existing' role of civil society in the context of Cameroon. It points in the direction and reality that Cameroon civil society, although sharing common characteristics with other countries, fails to operate in the same way as in the developed polities of Western Europe and North America.

One can advance the point that the existing leadership style in Africa encourages conflicts rather than bringing peace, development and national unity. The dividends of democracy do not exist. If there are pockets of democracy, they do not trickle down to the people who matter. The challenge of development

facing the government comes from donor bodies and civil society organisations stressing the need to ‘put people first’ and to give development a ‘human face’ as a concrete and comprehensive road map for social development (Preston 1993, World Bank 1991, 1993 and 1996). There is a call to re-democratise and create a new and just society. However, that genuine call is not making the expected breakthrough to institutionalising democratic governance, due to a combination of factors.

Presently, social and human development inequalities remain untouched by the reform process, if any exists at all. The Cameroon government’s 2005 budget with tax increases was not one geared towards development with a human face; rather, it was a policy approach that deepens poverty, social inequalities and intensifies class divisions. The poor are thrown further down the alleys of despair. It is difficult in this context to see how the government’s aim to achieve social development objectives with more equity, effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved when the poor are further marginalised and excluded in the development process. It can be argued that with the transition from the colonial to post-colonial administration, development policy took on completely different functions and objectives. The same can be said of the coming into being of the monolithic party structure which legitimatised the regime constructed by Cameroon’s leadership after independence.

From a broad and sustainable development perspective, policy reform must reflect a deeper shift that encompasses key actors especially civil society and the private productive sector, to help promote Cameroon’s integration into the global economy (see Bonvin 1997:40). The collapse of civil society came with the formation or co-option of all political parties under the umbrella of the Cameroon National Union (CNU) in 1966, and intensified under the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) in 1984. This co-option shares some common trends. Firstly, the immediate objective was the forging of a nation-building project. Unfortunately, and seen from a long-term perspective, it had serious destructive effects on the economy, the social fabric and the nation’s institutions. Secondly, the assessment of the available options to reform social policy systems under various forms of development strategy is, at best, constrained by financial factors, and is in most cases non-existent due to mismanagement. Thirdly, national wealth is still unequally distributed, and international development assistance, on which the country relies to implement human development programmes, is unlikely to increase. Government investment in social development is therefore unlikely to increase, particularly as the country is unable to meet its own share of the contract with the Bretton Woods financial conglomerates and other donor bodies. The return to political pluralism in the early 1990s has not ushered in the expected change.

Given the inter-related persistence of these trends, the need to examine the challenges posed by current policy is even more urgent. In light of the history of state-civil society intercourse since the return to political pluralism, Cameroon is

not better placed to face the challenges of public policy reforms in the interest of the poor and forgotten majority. The 2005 budget with its more than a hundred per cent tax increase in many sectors, coupled with the fact that there has been no salary increase in the past twenty-three years as against a 70 per cent reduction in wages, constitutes a serious test case for state-civil society relations in Cameroon. The slogan 'great ambitions' constitutes therefore an anvil for serious confrontation (or is it acquiescence?) between state and civil society. By and large, these new tax increases further perpetuate, pervert and deepen the state of poverty and exclusion, and do not constitute poverty alleviation (as is claimed by the World Bank-inspired jargon). In short, the 'forgotten majority' was further forgotten and marginalised through poverty elevation strategies put in place following the budgetary plan of 2005. Government became too big, moving from forty-five to sixty-five ministries in that same year; axes are too high,³ with dwindling social amenities and poor quality service delivery. It is glaringly contradictory that these increases are coming after the 11 October 2004 Presidential elections with the ensuing 3 November 2004 'Great Ambition' policy statement.

How is civil society going to act? No action by civil society consolidates the 'peace and stability' and the 'captiveness of civil society' thesis. On the other hand, reaction by civil society will entail exerting its independence and the 'role fulfilment' thesis as the custodian of power by popular will, which could lead to confrontation with the state - thereby dispelling the peace, stability and tranquillity thesis. Seen in either perspective, the nature, structure and functioning of the state in Cameroon is seriously put to the test. Can poverty be alleviated when policy measures are designed to hurt the poor most? What form of society is the state out to create? Changes in society that place people in a precarious mental and psychological balance plunging them into a situation of self-dissatisfaction, deprivation and disappointment, have put classical concepts of development into serious doubt. Hence the calls for an alternative development strategy that can best resolve the plethora of problems confronting the development path of Cameroon.

It is therefore imperative for Cameroon to strengthen its institutions and democracy in addition to promoting good governance. The performance of Cameroon in the process of democratisation has been mixed, at times dismal and marked by progress in some areas and failures in others. On the one hand, there has been some degree of shared norms of political trust, tolerance, willingness to compromise, and belief in democratic legitimacy. On the other, just the opposite makes it difficult for the country to bring itself together, thus failing in the process of transforming itself into a modern state. The democratisation process is derailed due to the impasse characterising the civil society and state relationship. Within the context of an 'autocratic regime', 'movement-government' and 'weak-state' regime forms, it is difficult to accelerate the democratisation process and to create an alternative development path. The absence of checks and balances breeds cor-

ruption which discourages investors' interest. This gives birth to an ailing economy and governance practices deeply threatened by the cancer of corruption. Government cannot win the fight against maldevelopment, corruption and poor quality service delivery without incorporating the services (participation, partnership and responsibility) of civil society and other key players.

A transformation that can only be realised through the interplay of the key actors in a spirit of partnership, participation, and responsibility must include equitable sharing of the wealth of the nation. It calls for democratic governance, accountability, transparency and a genuine reform of institutions and attitudes of the people. Not surprisingly, this provides plenty of scope for mounting criticism of statism, and such criticism has been readily forthcoming, assuming an almost ritualised character. The general point is worth restating in a slightly different way: most African states conform to the essentially coercive notion of power implied by the definition of a strong state vis-à-vis its people, but ironically, in the subtle meaning, they remain weak and collapsed states precisely for failing to address the real plight of the people. The state of complementary relations, participation and partnership between state and civil society does not exist to give the legitimacy and effectiveness much needed by the state for proper governance and the exercise of power.

Failure here could be traced to the multi-faceted role the state has taken, beginning from that of the 'monolithic state' that came into being immediately after independence, acquiring excessive 'strength', but a strength which was not able to be generalised across issue areas. The Cameroon state is not a unified organisation; some parts are stronger, others weaker. According to Skocpol (1985:17), 'one of the most important facts about the power of a state may be its unevenness across policy areas'. Government's effectiveness in letting people off the hook who embezzle state funds has not been matched in the area of sustainable development or even the domain of individual collective freedom. There is no equivalent in the state's capacity in unbalanced or selective discriminative development practices between the provinces. One can also point to sectoral evidence of exceptions to state strength and state weakness. The role of the ruling elite within the state and private sector takes centre stage.

The phenomenon of the foreign-funded civil society with its own political agenda different from that of the people places the country on a particular plane, where the kind of social contract between civil society and state does not genuinely exist to forge ahead. Operating under an autocratic state regime system, civil society is unable to play the input role it should in shaping public policy through critical, open and serious discourses between the state and the other key players of civil society.

Democratisation in Cameroon has brought with it debates over the very nature of that democracy. The nature of the state system dictates the pace and structure of the governance process. In this regard, civil society plays a key role in Cameroon's

progress towards democratisation, unity and development. The active role and full participation of civil society is absolutely essential to the success of every progressive venture undertaken in the country. Reforming Cameroon's institutions is essential for balanced development that meets the basic needs of the people. What is fundamental is that government no longer sees itself as the sole supplier of social services. Given the new political dispensation that emerged in the 1990s, the option of incorporation and the search for partnership with the private sector and civil society remain vital in propelling the country into a modern state. It is only by breaking existing barriers that new hopes can be created.

The Need for Institutional Reforms

In a multitude of policy assessments African governments are classified as illegitimate, unable to implement policies, and unresponsive to the needs of their peoples. Reform is the best way out of the ongoing malaise. Reform should not only be directed to the government but should touch all components of society. Good governance is the key to institutional reforms and this should also impose demands on policy-makers in their exercise of power in the following respects:

- Creating an effective state possessing and exhibiting an enabling political, economic, legal and cultural environment that spurs economic growth and ensures equitable distribution.
- Ensuring the incorporation and representation of civil society and communities in policy articulation and aggregation processes, with the state accelerating and facilitating political and social interaction as well as fostering societal cohesion, stability, unity and a sense of belonging.
- Enabling a private sector to play an independent and productive role in the economic transformation of the country.
- Negotiating with an international community not hostile to the aspirations of the people but positively responding to the priority goals for economic transformation set by the government and people.
- Creating an enabling environment is vital for the economic take-off and political transformation of the country. The process requires a number of inter-related policy actions that should push forward the following developments:
 - Creating accountable and transparent administrative structures;
 - Ensuring the separation of powers between the branches of government, including the establishment and maintenance of law, order, and equal justice for all;
 - Extending social amenities and infrastructure to the rural areas, protecting the poor and forgotten groups as well as including these vulnerable groups in the decision-making process;

- Drastic reforms within the structures and functions of political parties, civil society organisations and social movements;
- Paying greater attention to the development and utilisation of science, research and technology in the development process, bearing in mind the impact of knowledge-based development in today's world.

Cameroon is also in dire need of institutional reforms that should lead to inclusive democracy which secures people's rights and liberties. Reconstructing the state through reforming its institutions calls for inclusive democracy. Democracy presents the only form of political regime compatible with respecting all five categories of rights – political, social, economic, cultural and civil. Democratic governance presupposes the existence of effective domestic institutions. Currently, achieving good governance in Cameroon is an uphill task because of the complex hierarchical nature of the political power structures of government institutions, which is further hijacked by ethnic hegemonic forces, patronage and nepotism. There is a gross lack of political will in ensuring that representative democracy, with the people having the ultimate authority, takes hold in the country. The return to multiparty political pluralism has not reformed the legislative arm of government with the erstwhile monolithic party structure still enjoying hegemonic sway under the guise of political pluralism. Although 'good governance' remains an attractive concept, it equally implies value judgments that shift between communities and political parties. Achieving most of the precepts of good governance, such as increased public sector efficiency or reduced poverty implies a loss to some groups. For instance, increased efficiency in public service delivery implies curtailing the activities of rent seekers. On the other hand, poverty reduction calls for equitable income redistributive measures that obviously would hurt the interests of the affluent class.

Therefore, good governance and reformed state institutions cannot be attained in a vacuum. They have to be the product of a bargaining process between the various stakeholders in society – the state, civil society and the private sector – entrenched under the auspices of the 'will of the majority' as clearly, fairly and freely expressed via an electoral process based on pluralist political systems (see de Mello & Barenstein 2001).

At least two roles can be identified for civil society organisations in the democratic process of Cameroon, namely: (i) propagating democratic values, creating awareness and socialising their members in these values, as well as defending democratic principles and social justice in the society as a whole, as was demonstrated in the early 1990s with the return to multiparty politics; (ii) promoting democratic governance that entails serving as a buffer between the state and society through advocacy, monitoring and seeking to consolidate and strengthen good governance and transparency. For civil society to play this role requires access to information and the ability to disseminate it to its members and to overcome the handicap of total dependence on foreign sources of financial,

organizational and other forms of support. To begin with, CSOs in Cameroon should endeavour to put their own houses in order by practising internal democracy, accountability and transparency (that is, developing a certain governance culture) as well as ensuring that their membership is as inclusive as possible so as to act as genuine instruments of national integration. They should take off from the basis of creating and strengthening mechanisms for peer group review. In short, they should monitor and police themselves. It is equally important for the state to learn to dialogue with civil society so that the different key actors can transform themselves into powerful agents of change that lead to and sustain democratic governance, accountability, transparency, inclusion and love for the country. The challenge to civil society, the state and other key actors in building and consolidating effective democratic governance is therefore enormous. Making the effort by taking the first steps in the right direction means a lot on the road towards effective democratic governance and building a better and bright and sustainable future for present and subsequent generations. Are Cameroonians prepared to begin on that long march?

Conclusion

Many factors need to be intertwined to create the necessary enabling environment for a country like Cameroon to be party to the globalised democratic world of the twenty-first century. As earlier indicated, government cannot alone create the playing field to ensure that inclusive democracy reigns supreme. Though government holds the key to opening up the gate to a level playing field, other actors must be ready to be participants and responsible players in the chess game of politics. As a way forward, it is imperative that a number of interrelated approaches be articulated and aggregated between the stakeholders.

Interrelated Approaches to Securing the Rights and Liberties of the People

Government credibility: The credibility and legitimacy of the government is primordial. Illegitimacy and low credibility of government exert high costs of implementation. The New Government of Achievement created on 8 December 2004 illustrates those high costs and relates to the inertia of incredibility that has gripped the governance form in Cameroon for the past decades. Failure is what characterises this regime form and this becomes self-fulfilling as resistance to new policies which force the government to constantly change cabinets yet with no concrete results being produced. Government needs to break away entirely from past practices to improve its reputation, to gain credibility and the confidence of the people.

Accountable Administrative Systems: Progress in the democratisation process, accountability, transparency and quality service delivery have been used by external donors as key elements of aid conditionality for financial support. The percep-

tion is that accountability and transparency increase public sector credibility. The government has been forced to enhance institutional accountability by increasing administrative transparency. The Cameroon Good Governance Report is a typical example. What are lacking are the implementation aspects of the report. The ongoing criss-crossing of newly appointed Prime Minister E. Inoni (8 December 2004) from one ministerial department to another to restore sanity, efficiency and productivity in the public service sector is part of the attempt to build confidence and credibility by the state. But accountability and transparency call for institutional, legal and efficient structures to ensure a functional and administrative input and output function. Public service output functions require credibility, sustainable procedures and verifiable standards.

Political and Economic Environment Minimising Risks: The political and economic environment should be such that it greatly minimises risk, acting as a bait for foreign investment as well as encouraging domestic mobilisation of scarce resources for long-term investment crucial for developmental purposes. There is a dire need for an effective regulatory framework to curtail the excess of monopolies or cartels. The behaviour of the political elite should be called to order in order to make the public sector more effective, efficient and appreciated by society. Therefore, quality services and the judicious use of state property and institutions must be given priority. Low productivity and poor accountability within the public service sector is a deterrent to good governance. Government is required to adopt a more holistic measure of inclusion to restore confidence, credibility, accountability, transparency and quality service delivery.

Domestic Politics Encompassing Interest Groups: Bearing in mind that domestic politics encompasses most interest groups and that a functional political system is one that is open to contestation, the need for creating an enabling playing field is important. It is this enabling playing field that can show the path towards democracy, transparency and increased accountability. Although there have been strong external inputs for the country to walk on the path of pluralistic governance system, it is evident that sustainable political systems can be achieved only over a long period of learning on the job. But since government stands as a stumbling block in the process of creating a pluralistic system, it goes without saying that the learning process does not exist for the people to eventually cultivate a culture of pluralistic system of government. It is also a process that calls for the total engagement of civil society organisations, with their activities carried out unhindered, unrestricted, unfettered or unrestrained. Political participation by the multitude is required and must be encouraged by the key player - the state - and in partnership with others.

Governance as Part of the Political Process: Judging from recent debates, governance is part and parcel of the political process in which civil society is a major contributor. Generally, good governance cannot be sustained in a hostile environment characterised by the politics of exclusion. Much remains to be done in opening up the political space in Cameroon for the genuine introduction, articulation and

aggregation of multiparty politics and for civil society and the press to operate unhindered. Only through an open door policy can the level of political accountability and transparency be elevated, so that political competition can prevail to give credibility and legitimacy to the system.

Notes

1. The idea of inertia was openly acknowledged by President Biya as being at the basis of poor governmental performance and stalled development.
2. The idea was launched by President Biya as a campaign slogan during the 2004 Presidential elections and to inaugurate his second seven-year term.
3. Fiscal stamp moved from 500 to 1000 CFA, tollgates from 500 to 1000 CFA; windscreen licenses from 15,000 to 25,000 and from 25,000 to 1000,000 CFA, and passports from 30,000 to 50,000 CFA.

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