

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF VOICE OF GRACE FOUNDATION
PROGRAMMES IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG CAMEROONIAN
WOMEN IN LIMBE CAMEROON

BY

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Abstract

The study sought to analyze the role of NGO programs such as the Voice of Grace Foundation in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe. The study explored the economic hardship faced by women in Limbe. It equally analysed the role and contribution of the Voice of Grace Foundation to the welfare of women in their efforts to alleviate poverty. The mixed method set the base for answers to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was used to target the women and staff of the Voice of Grace Foundation. The study targeted 50 participants, in return 35 respondents views was received. From the key findings it became apparent that with the support of Voice of Grace Foundation programmes, women gained knowledge and skills as a source of employment in the informal sector. The Voice of Grace Foundation programmes empowered women through provision of seed capital, loans, income generating and vocational training skills. Despite this support the women have not gained adequate empowerment to reduce poverty in Limbe. Thus the women lack basic education to eradicate poverty in the formal sector jobs. The Voice of Grace Foundation faced challenges such as: Lack of support and policies from the government, national and international bodies, to put an end to patriarchal domination and discriminatory cultural and legal laws. As a result it is difficult for the Voice of Grace Foundation to satisfy, the growing population of vulnerable women in Limbe. The researcher recommends for a collective effort from the government, and nongovernmental agents, local institutions, and international bodies to improve the status of women with adequate education and empowerment that is necessary for women to attain strategic gender needs. This will complement the efforts of Voice of Grace Foundation to give women the capacity to contribute to the Millennium Development goals to alleviate poverty.

Key Words: NGO, Poverty, Poverty alleviation and Empowerment

Declaration

This Dissertation is my original work except where sources have been acknowledged.

The work has never been submitted, nor will it ever be, to another University in the awarding of a degree.

STUDENT.....

DATE.....

Signature

SUPERVISOR.....

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my late father NTUI JEROME TABORT P.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AFCOM	Association of Cameroonian Women Female Jurist
ACAFEJ	Association of Cameroon Female Jurist
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CAMCCUL	Cameroon Cooperative Union League
CAMWOCA	Cameroon Women Caucus
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CRR	Centre for Reproductive Rights
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CAMNAFAW	Cameroon Women National Forum
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EISA	Electra Institute of Southern Africa
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FIDA	Federation of International Women Lawyers
GAD	Gender and Development

HPI	Heifer Project International
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NAPMEW	National Association of Professional Media Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RPHC	Reorientation Primary Health Care
SLF	Sustainable Livestock Foundation
SGN	Strategic Gender Needs
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Plans
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
VGF	Voice of Grace Foundation
WID	Women in Development
WB	World Bank
WWF	World wide Fund for Nature
UNDP	Human Development Report
UN	United Nations

UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture
IPU	International Parliamentary Union
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
PGN	Practical Gender Needs
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In the developing world including Cameroon, women constitute a larger percentage of the population. The (United Nations Development Program Report, 2005), states that the majority of 1.3 million people who live on \$1 or less per day, 70 % of such people are women. Cameroonian women are not an exception to this fact (Ibid). They appear to be very poor due to socio economic, cultural, and political discriminations at the national and international levels. This study therefore evaluates the efforts of Voice of Grace Foundation programmes in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe. In order to reduce unemployment among women, jobs are created as a means of alleviating poverty. The NGOs have various programs and activities that are implemented to give vulnerable women the capacity to improve living conditions and curb poverty in the south- west region of Cameroon (Cernea, 1991 & Fowler 1991).

The United Nations International Conference in 1975 and the International Decade for women (1975-1985) clearly showed a shift in international attention on women issues. The decade was later followed by conferences such as the Nairobi Conference of Women Forum in 1985. It was organized by NGOs that cantered on women and development. The conference, demonstrated international awareness on the role of women and NGOs. This was another step in international awareness of women's issues

both by men and women. It ended with a historic recommendation aimed at accelerating the advancement, empowerment and integration of women in development. Most national governments and NGOs in the south, have since the Beijing Platform in 1995, tried to move those resolutions into the fields. In Cameroon, for example, efforts such as the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, encouragement of women's movements and attempts to consider some degree of gender balance in appointments and employment are visible. Most of these efforts were encouraging as they do not seem to have affected the poor, uneducated rural, or the low- income urban women. These women continue to carry out informal jobs as they find it difficult to compete equally with their male counterparts for lucrative opportunities. The gender gap therefore continues to widen in the country (Endeley, 1998).

1.1Background

According to Dibussi, (2013) Cameroon women constitute of 52 percent of the population yet they hold only 14 percent of the seats in parliament and only six percent of mayoral posts. Although women have a long presence in politics they are often marginalized and their participation has been quite slow. Equally important, women occupy less than 8% of the political and decision making system of the country. The women and girls have remained the most affected by poverty and other societal ills such as discriminatory legal laws and customary laws which favour men than women.

In addition, Cameroon had its first woman in government in 1970 that was ten years after independence. That was the appointment of Delphine Zanga Tsogo (Vice – Minister of Health and Public Welfare from 1970 to 1975 and Ministers of Social Welfare from 1975 to 1984). Since 1970 - 2013, only 24 women constituted of Ministers, Minister Delegate or Secretaries of state in Cameroon. To illustrate this in 2011, the government appointed by President Paul Biya, consisted of 7 out of 38 ministers who were female. Notably, none of the seven minister delegates appointed were female; none of the four ministers in charge of the mission at the Presidency were female. Consequently, 9 out of 52 (17.31%) members of the government in Cameroon constituted of females. However although the progress of women participation improved in 1957, when the first woman was elected in parliament .The progress still remains insufficient thus since the establishment of the legislative assembly, only 8.41 % of women have been elected while 11.6% of women have been elected in municipal councils. Thus women are involved in unpaid home care which is largely unrecognized and undervalued. Consequently only 8% of Mayors in Cameroon are female and 0% of the Regional governors are Female (Richard, 2013). The poverty rate among women in Cameroon is reinforced by the lack of women representatives in decision making positions. This slows down women rights to participation in the society as very few women stand in leadership positions to call for an end to patriarchal domination, legal and cultural discriminations against women.

However the government, faith-based organizations, local associations and NGOs have initiated various programmes in order to alleviate poverty among women. Following the (World Bank Report, 2000) and the (Millennium Development Goals, 2002) combating poverty in Cameroon has become a multi- stakeholder issue with both local and global players. Key Structural Reforms adopted by the Cameroon Government between 1990 and 2000, favoured the growth of NGOs. For instance, (Kabeer, 2003) remarks that various NGOs initiated programs which addressed women issues such as (i) improving access to land and property, adequate shelter, basic needs and services for the urban and rural poor, with special attention to female heads of households, (ii) increasing access to decent employment, credit and income generation opportunities through appropriate national policies which promote equal opportunities for women and men.

Notably events such as the Nairobi Conference of women Forums in 1985 and the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 are high profile gatherings did not only increased the awareness that women play a key role in development rather it called for action in order to end all forms of marginalization on women by the social, economic and cultural laws. In response to the calls from these gatherings, most national governments and NGOs initiated programs and activities that aimed at improving the living standards of vulnerable women. In order to reduce poverty and unemployment among women, jobs are created as a means to eradicate poverty (Cernea, 1991). The study therefore seeks to evaluate the impact of Voice of Grace Foundation programmes among Cameroonian women alleviating poverty in Limbe Cameroon

1.1.1 Women in Cameroon

In addition, Neba, (1997) states that the reality of Cameroon women's marginalization is evident in the economic sector. For this reason, women are mostly found in the informal sector where they operate as small entrepreneurs. For example they sell food stuffs and other articles on the streets to expand their business. Yet women access to credit is inadequate. Equally, in the social domain, women in Cameroon are constrained by very stringent gender biases and socio cultural practices. For the most part woman can neither own nor inherit property or land, very few girls go to school, and they are forced into marriages most often when they are still teenagers. These obstacles have led to poverty among Cameroonian women. Hence most women lack adequate education. This explains why they are not free to compete with men over jobs in the formal sector (Fonjong, 2001).

1.1.2 Background of the Voice of Grace Foundation

The Voice of Grace Foundation (V.G.F) is an accredited anti poverty, social and humanitarian organization founded in November 2006. Its main objective is to empower rural women, single teenage mothers, and unemployed youths. Similarly, the NGO's programmes has as aim to sensitize women on issues pertaining to their rights (education, health, sexual reproduction), participation, and promote the fight against gender base violence and discrimination against women (Voice of Grace Foundation Annual Conference Report, 2011-2012).

The rural women in Limbe represent poverty and its associated ills such as prostitution, widespread disease, poor and low living conditions, voiceless, discrimination, violence, inequality. (Voice of Grace Foundation Annual Conference Report, 2011-2012).

In addition the Director of Voice of Grace Foundation goes further to explain that, he was influenced by the women's efforts and potential to change the whole community and families, yet they are severely under -resourced and under -valued. Therefore to give women the encouragement they deserve and bring out their potentials, he started the project of the Voice of Grace Foundation. He gave non refundable small sums as seed capital to a good large number of socially disadvantaged women. As a result the initiative later on grew into this full National and International Project program that serves as a source of "empowerment for voiceless" women in Limbe. (Voice of Grace Foundation Annual Conference Report, 2011-2012).

1.2 Problem statement

In Cameroon as elsewhere, women's poverty is often attributed to a number of personal factors, including low literacy and the absence of an enabling environment. This is reflected in the (CEDAW, Report for Cameroon in 2000), where the statistics indicated that 68 % of women over the age of 25 in Cameroon are illiterates compared to 43% of men. Cameroonian women suffer from poverty as Cameroon is a predominantly patriarchal society and there exists some legal and customary laws that do not favour

women ownership of land and property. (Johnson 1995, P 57:283-295). In fact in Cameroon some tribes and rural societies still believe that the girl child needs little or no education. They believe that the girl child needs just a little basic informal education from her parents after which she is forced into early marriage. This implies that while the boy child goes to school, the girl child has to look after the large African family and take care of their husbands. For this reason there is high illiteracy rate among women in Limbe. And most of them are vulnerable to poverty. This is as a result of the high drop out of girls from school. Consequently, women in Limbe are less competitive in the job market for high skill, - medium- to high wage jobs that are often reserved for the educated few. Only 40 % of women in Cameroon are in the working class yet they still suffer from a lot of discrimination from Patriarchal dominations, legal and customary laws which hinders women from owning property (Cheka, 1996). There is need to understand the impact of programmes implemented by NGOs from a broader perspective hence the programmes do not seem to promote and alter the balance of power between men and women in the studied society. For this reason women in Limbe Cameroon are victims of poverty.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the programmes implemented by the Voice of Grace Foundation to support the efforts among Cameroonian women reduce

poverty in Limbe. The study will contribute to the efforts of Cameroon government to encourage programs on gender equality and poverty alleviation for women.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study will contribute to existing knowledge in areas of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment to alleviate poverty. Notably, Endeley, (1998) remarks that the connections between poverty and women's lack of power over resources has influenced the attention of policy makers and the government to mainstream development all over the world. The study will analyze the efforts of V.G.F among Cameroonian women in Limbe alleviating poverty.

1.5 Research Objectives

- 1.** To explore the economic hardships faced by the women in Limbe.
- 2.** To analyze the role of NGOs especially the Voice of Grace Foundation (VGF) in alleviating poverty among women in Limbe Cameroon.
- 3.** To examine the contribution Voice of Grace Foundation to the welfare of women in their efforts to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth

1.6 Research Questions.

1. What are the economic hardships experienced by women in Limbe, Cameroon?
2. What programmes have been initiated by Voice of Grace Foundation (VGF) in order to alleviate poverty among women in Limbe?
3. To what extent has the V.G.F contributed to promoting the welfare of women in Limbe, Cameroon?

1.7 Assumptions

- The research is based on the assumption that majority of women in Cameroon, represented by the women in Limbe Cameroon are victims of poverty.
- The women in Limbe are poor as a result of patriarchal domination discriminatory legal and traditional laws.

1.8 Delimitation of study

This research was conducted in Limbe Cameroon. The research focused on the impact of Voice of Grace Foundation in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe. Poverty among women in Cameroon highly affects women in Limbe who are involved in the informal sector activities such as: food production and marketing which are very low income activities. However this is as a result of the women's low educational status (Abonge, 2001). Although Cameroonian women are poor due to a

number of factors that includes : socio- cultural values, customary legal laws in Cameroon, laws on ownership of land, property and marriage rights that restrict women's rights to resources. The researcher will be delimited to patriarchal domination that hinders women advancement in education as a major factor that contributed to poverty among women in Limbe Cameroon.

1.9 Limitations of Study

The researcher faced a number of challenges which constitute the limitations of the study. The researcher was not able to meet the participants under study personally. This is because the researcher could not travel from Zimbabwe to Cameroon on the time of the research study to collect data personally. However, this challenge was overcome by appointing a research assistant who was to be paid to administer the questionnaires. Equally important the fact that the researcher could not travel to Cameroon hindered the smooth flow of the research. This is because if the researcher had travelled to collect data in person, the researcher would have interviewed some representatives from the local government offices in Limbe, Women groups in faith based organisations as well as the ministry of women affairs in order to seek for their opinion on the contribution of the impact of Voice of Grace Foundation in alleviating poverty among women in Limbe Cameroon. Hence their contribution would have been meaningful to the research study. Owing to limited time, the researcher had to reduce the sample to the women and staff of Voice of Grace Foundation in Limbe.

However, to overcome the challenge of not being able to carry out an interview, the researcher delimited the data collection tools to questionnaires and a desk study, including the Voice of Grace Foundation's Annual Conference Report Journal (2011-2012). Data from other cities where NGOs have been initiating programmes would have contributed to the generalization of the results.

1.10 Definition of Concepts

NGO: An NGO is a group of players who are active in the efforts of international development to increase the welfare of poor people in poor countries. (Fisher, 1997) NGOs are acknowledged to be pivotal to poverty alleviation, especially in third world countries where the government capacity and revenue are often limited. (Hulme & Edwards, 1996)

Poverty: According to Piachaud, (1978, P.147:164), the term poverty is more of a conceptual term. Various schools of thought view poverty differently. The economist relates it more to the level of income and consumptions. Despite the various views from different schools of thought about poverty, what is important is that poverty centered on the absence of some basic necessities. The inability to get something due to one reason or the other, including vulnerability, powerlessness and social exclusion (Kakwani, 2007)

Poverty alleviation: (Sachs, 2005) describes poverty alleviation as a means of addressing barriers to human well being. This implies all the possible measures put in place to overcome poverty and empower the less privileged.

Empowerment: (Kabeer & Sen, 2001) assert that empowerment signifies increased participation in decision-making. It is this process through which people feel themselves to be capable of making decisions with the right to do so. Personal empowerment can lead to changes in existing institutions laws. However without a collective empowerment the personal empowerment and choices are limited.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the theoretical framework that guides the research and the conceptual framework upon which this research is built. Equally reviews on some related literatures based on the Feminist and empowerment theory will be used in the study to show the importance of women empowerment.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to review some related literatures that have contributed to promoting the work of NGOs on women empowerment. The researcher was guided by Amartya Sen.'s theory of poverty based on the Capability and Function Approach. (Sen, 1985: Sen, 1992) .The theory guided the researcher to analyze the relationship between donor organizations and women in their efforts to alleviate poverty. The researcher also used some contributions from the socialist feminist and empowerment theory, to show the importance of women empowerment in the study. The word empowerment has different meanings depending on different context (Power, 1993 P.5) .The researcher posits that empowerment may either imply the education or capacity that an NGO may implement on women to enable them improve their status and living conditions.

2.2 Capability and Function Approach

The study will be guided by Amartya Sen.'s theory on poverty. This theory is based on the capability and function approach. The conceptual foundations of the capability approach can be found in Sen's critiques of traditional welfare economics, which conflates well-being with utility (income or commodity) (Cooker, 2002; Clark, 2002, pp. 29 – 34). To distinguish human functioning and capability, Sen., emphasizes that economic growth and expansion of goods and services are necessary for human development. Equally important, Sen, describes. Functioning and capability. "Functioning according to Sen is an achievement of a person: what she or he manages to be (Sen, 1985 p.10). That is to say achieving a function means to be adequately capable with a given bundle of commodities and social factors. Therefore commodity refers to the use a person makes out of the commodities at his command. On the other hand, Saith, 2001, p. 8) claims that "capability" reflects a person's ability to achieve a given functioning (Doing or being). On the contrary (Sen, 1985) uses capability as the ability to function in different ways. To illustrate Sen posits that capability set is obtained by applying all feasible utilizations to all attainable commodity bundles (Sen, 1985; Saith, 2001; Sen, 1985; 1992; 1999). However, Sen observed that the different people and societies typically differ in their capacity to convert income and commodity into valuable achievements. To illustrate Sen claims that the commodity requirement for a more complex social achievements such as to appear in public without shame will depend on "cultural" factors such as social conventions and custom or status and class (Sen, 1985, pp. 25 -26 : 1999, pp .70-71). Notably, Sen, compares the well-being of

different people by not considering only the commodities that each person can successfully command. Rather he looks at how well people are able to function with goods and services at their disposal.

As mentioned above (Sen, 1985) capability is the ability for someone to attain an objective based on the existing opportunities around him/her. Equally important the capability approach states that development has as aim to realize human potentials. Therefore the efforts put forward on poverty alleviation programmes must focus on the participation of an individual, and not only on the goods and services provided by a donor organization for empowerment purpose.

In addition the capability approach does not encourage organizations to empower poor people with financial aid. This is because to them it means under estimating the individual's potential (Sen, 1985). The researcher used this as a critic on NGOs who support the efforts of women to reduce poverty through financial aid. Similarly, based on the capability approach, the researcher posits that NGOs do not need to empower women with funds to eradicate poverty. Rather what is required from NGOs to is to bring out the potential and ability which the women already possess (Sen, 1992). This is because in most cases, women have the capability but they do not know how to be creative with their abilities. Therefore offering financial aids as a source of

empowerment for women to reduce poverty will make women to not realize the ability they have to reduce poverty.

The capability approaches, according to the researcher will encourage women to have the powers to direct their lives when given the opportunity. Equally, it will contribute to make the efforts of Voice of Grace Foundation more productive and sustainable. Hence empowerment has an upper hand on capability approach. Notably, both the ability of women and the effectiveness of the Voice of Grace Foundation programmes have a significant role to play on women's efforts to alleviate poverty in Limbe Cameroon. The theory emphasized that what is to be considered in empowerment is not the goods and services that an NGO provides but the capacity that the NGO builds out of the person (Sen, 1992).

According to Sen's theory of poverty, the capability and function approach are interdependent. Hence the approaches assert that everyone is free to use his capacity to function the way he chooses. For this reason it is evident that capability approach is a liberal theory. It gives to all the choice to freely choose opportunity (Royens, 2005).

Sen, (1992) states that, "function and capability" are interdependent. Functioning is the achievement that the individual will attain while capability is the ability of that individual to attain his/ her achievement. To illustrate Cameroonian women alleviating

poverty will be capable of reducing poverty depending on their capability to use the opportunities that V.G.F will provide. This could imply the capability to improve on their strategic gender needs such as education. The researcher remarks that even though patriarchal discrimination in Cameroon has restricted women in Limbe from education. The women still have the freedom to use their capability to function. This implies that although V.G.F empower women to alleviate poverty, women equally have the capacity that will compliment the efforts of the NGO to improve their welfare to promote economic growth.

Therefore the impact of Voice of Grace Foundation programmes to alleviate poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe can be analysed based on women ability to use the opportunity they derive from NGO programmes. Notably (Sen, 1992) capability approach, will expose the capacity by women to reduce poverty, base on their ability and potentials. Consequently this will create a long term achievement to improve the efforts of women to alleviate poverty. Thus receiving empowerment in the form of financial aid, underestimates the potential of women.

More specifically, (Sen, 1992) remarks that modern society deprives “certain” citizens of power and control, which then results to poverty for those citizens. In order to escape from such poverty, Sen. believes that a society must provide all of its citizens with political, economic and social freedom to use their capability to function.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The concept of Feminism emphasizes on the importance of the social, political and economic structures that shape human societies. It stresses that gender must be considered when examining the effects of oppression and domination in the society (Kabeer, 2009: Carr 2003: Grosz (2010). The feminist social theory considers both gender inequality and discrimination (Lee, 2001: Mullay, 2010). The Feminist social work theory and practise also has much in common with empowerment, particularly in their focus on domination and subordination even though each of them are taught separately. According to (Poorman, 2003, p.220) feminist social theory specifically examine role expectation, status, and power differences related to gender while empowerment theory looks more specifically at the role of culture and to some extent class status in shaping individuals and problems. In addition, feminist social workers were among the first to recognize that empowerment must be anchored within women own experiences (Carr, 2003: Grosz, 2010).

The feminist social work emphasized on the connection and the power of a mutual relationship (Jordan et al.: Jordan, 2010). Meanwhile Genero et al. (1992) support the feminist social work, when they claim that a mutual relationship between people in the society be it men or women paves way for a mutual support from each other into a relationship with dynamic. The individuals support one another to improve life conditions. For this reason empowerment becomes an important element that seeks to

redress marginalization and bring together people of opposite sex in the society. This calls for collective transformation (Lee, 2001). The feminist social work theory according to (Carr, 2003; Carroll 2004) is a process that begins by recognizing the nature of the oppression one is experiencing followed by an increase in the awareness and consciousness that brings transformation into an individual . Meanwhile (AlMased & Julia, 2007) posits that empowerment is best viewed as a theoretical framework that enables people to take more control over their lives. However the Radical like the socialist feminist criticised societal systems as built on the oppression of women. Therefore they call for a fundamental change in all systems, such as education, legal and social welfare (Saulinier, 2008). Similarly as mentioned above in order for the Voice of Grace Foundation to support the efforts of women to alleviate poverty, the must begin by creating awareness on the women in Limbe. The women have the right to be capable of understanding the cause of poverty among them. This is because creating consciousness among women on the discriminations they are facing (patriarchal practises and other discriminatory legal and cultural laws) will establish in the women a sense of value. This will strengthens their capacity to make meaningful contributions towards alleviate poverty. Hence both men and women play an important role in the society to improve living conditions.

2.3.1 Relevance of conceptual framework

The feminist and empowerment theory are important perspectives for social work micro and macro practice. Both advance human rights and social justice and add a distinct dimension to practise as they guide holistic assessment and intervention, especially with the marginalized people in the society. The core concepts in both theories is that it calls for mutuality, critical self awareness, collective action, and collaboration as important tools with individuals in the community. Both the feminist empowerment concepts serve a role in redressing unequal access to power and resources. (Carr, 2003; Grosz, 2010).

Therefore this concept is relevant to the study as it will not only strive to put an end to dominations and oppressions on women but it will provide an empowerment approach that will enable women in Limbe gain awareness, and control over their environment. Thus in order to alleviate poverty in Limbe Cameroon women the Voice of Grace Foundation need to be empowered to gain self –esteem and self – efficacy in order to adopt new positive behaviours free from stereotypes and discriminatory laws against women. Equally important this concept will build self confidence and engage in mutual relationships among individuals in the society..

2.3.2 Frame work for consideration

Women in Cameroon live in a predominantly patriarchal society. Their economic dependency on men is reinforced by discriminatory laws and policies in public institutions. For instance women lack equal marital and property rights as men. Most women lack control over property which makes it difficult for them to operate profitable businesses (Fonjong, 2001).

In addition Endeley, (1998) states that control over resources is the ultimate proof of women's economic, social and political empowerment. She sees the process of empowerment as enabling women to take an equal place with men. Equally important in order for women to participate equally in the development process; they need to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men.

2.3.3 Concept of Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is strategy to foster equality between women and men. It aims to integrate a gender perspective in all decision process of organization, institutions and administrations. Equally it uses all decision processes to foster equality between women and men (Mustakallio, 2011).

In order to ensure sustainable development, it is imperative to recognize the importance men and women in the society. Hence ECOSOC defines gender mainstreaming as “the process of accessing the implications for women and men for any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s and men’s concern and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally”. (Agreed Conclusion on Gender Mainstreaming, ECOSOC, 1997).

Equally important the feminist approach to poverty, focus on gender implication and social cost of poverty in the growing involvement of women in the informal sector of the economy. As a result of the differential treatment of girls and boys in the households, there are pressures on girls to get married off early. Consequently there is a higher school dropout rate for girls (Fonjong, 2004).

Gender mainstreaming started since 1985, with a future strategy for the advancement of women. The term gender mainstreaming for the first time at the Third World Conference on women in Nairobi called for government commitment to implement strategies for the advancement of women. This strategy required all the organizations under the United Nation to meet in Beijing in 1995 for the Fourth Conference on women United Nations. During these important gathering it was noted that equality for women was still limited

and fully protected against discriminations. Since then policies for gender equality has been promoted among states (Beijing, 1995).

According to (Mustakallio 2011) the aim of gender mainstreaming is to change gender neutral ways of thinking, and cultures. Gender equality calls for equal rights, possibilities and obligations for both men and women in the society. Gender equality entails that stereotyped concepts of gender roles must not restrict the opportunities of individuals. Equally important it means equal appreciation of the values, choices and life experiences typical of women and men. Gender equality does not mean seeking to make women and men the same.

Fonjong (2001) remarks that from a century perspective, women have remained concentrated in the informal sector of the economy in Cameroon. They operate as small entrepreneurs. For this reason they are absent from political parties or trade union meetings where candidates for important posts are selected. This is probably because the women are held back by household and community commitments which prevent women from being part of such important structures. It is within this unfavourable socio economic and political environment for Cameroonian women that most NGOs working in the country have made “gender mainstreaming” one of their major objectives. This is meant to ensure that both the long term and short term needs of the women are

strengthen. Thus it will promote an efficient participation of women in development and poverty eradication (Fonjong, 2001).

2.3.4 Concept of Women Empowerment.

The word empowerment has different meanings depending on different context. The concept of “empowerment” similar to Sen.’s., definition, entails providing the poor with the means to acquire a greater voice to claim justice within the society. According to the (World Bank Report, 2001) NGOs empowerment does not only grant women financial aid. Rather they provide women with the liberty and choice to learn skills that will enable them realize opportunities. Similarly (Sen, 1999) posits that capability is related to one’s ability to achieve an objective base on an existing opportunity around that person.

However the (World Bank, 2001), suggests that empowerment is a process of increasing the capacity of individuals or group to make a choice and transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. Meanwhile (Elson, 1992) holds that empowerment means to increase women capacity to take care of the family.

However (Boserup, 1988) an economist disagrees and challenges a strain of development thinking which disagrees with policies that give women better

employment. The development thinkers believe that women will end up taking away jobs from men if they are empowered. On the contrary the economist argues that women who work will create opportunities for other avenues for development.

Equally important (Boserup, 1988) considers development as a process that will help promote women's full participation. Planners according to the economist should involve women in full participation to increase productivity in the modern sector. Hence provide women with the necessary education. Consequently (Boserup, 1988) advises on the need to fit women in planning process because it is a necessary process to increase the status of women.

Similarly, Boserup claims, that patriarchal laws do not favour the girl child's education because they believe it is an attempt by women to take the positions and jobs of men. In addition (Boserup, 1988) posits that the status of women is intimately connected to their economic position to participate in economic activities. The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development. Therefore technical education is imperative for women if their ability to assist in the production process is recognized.

However equality between men and women entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices

without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality does not mean that women and men have to become the same. Rather it means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. These include equal treatment in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (ABC Of Women Worker's Rights And Gender Equality, ILO, Geneva, 2000, P .48).

Mayoux, (1998) holds that majority of NGO programs target women empowerment because they are motivated by many reasons. For (Garfinkle, 1994) women are among the poorest and most vulnerable of the under privileged groups. On the other hand other scholars suggest that investigating women's capability empowers them to make informed choices, as to which is a valuable goal in itself.

The Declaration of the International Women's Year by the UN General Assembly since 1975 could be considered as a turning point regarding the position of women in the society. The Cameroon government and the World Bank acknowledged women to be vital to the economic recovery process in Cameroon. Thus women enabled the government to weather a potentially explosive situation. They handled some adverse effects caused by the economic crisis in Cameroon (World Bank, 1991). Since then, several studies have shown that Cameroonian women lived up to expectations (World Bank & Nji, 1994).

Endeley, 1998 states that Cameroon women have contributed to the strategies to reduce the impact of government expenses on social services. Equally they have made up for the shortages in household income due to a decrease in men's contribution to family livelihood. The women activities included: (i) Extended working hours (ii) Starting up micro businesses within the informal sector, (iii) Adjusting the ways in which domestic chores are done, (iv) To provide health-care for their dependants.

2.4 History of NGO among Cameroonian women.

Nongovernmental Organizations are private organizations that provide support and implement humanitarian activities to sustain most families, homes, communities, villages and small groups of individuals in the society. The World Bank defines a nongovernmental organization as a private organization that pursues activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment and undertake community developments (World Bank, 2005).

According to Brown and korten, (1989:2) the World Bank lays emphasis on NGOs that are development oriented. This is because not all NGOs are development oriented. For (Cernea 1988:10), most NGOs that exist have as aim to promote the interests of their own members meanwhile (Kane 1990: 14-15) another analyst claim that an NGO should meet up with the following three criteria: It should be set up privately (not owned by the state) it should be structured and sufficiently autonomous in its activity and finance, It

should be non profit making in character to ensure its voluntary character, and lastly it should support development.

The main objective of NGOs is to impact on the lives of people pursue activities that help to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment and undertake community development in development countries. According to (Fishers, 1997) the steady rise of the NGOs has captivated the imagination of some policy makers, activist, analysts and observers. They claim that NGOs are in the midst of “a quiet” revolution (Edward and Hulme, 1996) .From this perspective NGOs are frequently idealized as organizations committed to doing good while setting aside the profit or politics (Zivetz 1991: Fisher 1996, P3).

Cameroon, is situated in the Saharan Africa, it is considered a lower middle income country (World Bank, 2005). Cameroonian women compose of two- thirds of the work force, meanwhile they receive only one tenth of the total income and they own one-hundredth of national property. Despite this contribution women, have limited voice in social discourse. Cameroon like most third world countries is characterized by communities and tribes where the patriarchal conception that “the women’s place is in the kitchen” is still very common. The girl child is not supposed to go to school instead she has to stay at home and take care of her siblings until the day she gets married and starts her own family. The only educational opportunity available for women was basic informal education from her parents (Fonjong, 2001).This in effect has resulted in high

illiteracy rates among women and has categorized them as a group vulnerable to poverty.

Equally as a result of the whole idea of early marriage with no education most women have become school drop outs (Fonjong, 2001). This situation makes women less competitive in the job market for high skill medium to high wage jobs which are often reserved for the most educated majority. According to (Sen, 2003) the state has failed in its capacity development to take a leading role in endorsing governmental social ownership of the development process, it has provided space for NGOs, either acting as agency demanding accountability or as development agency strengthening the state. Most donor agencies today emphasize on a state focused – development agenda and they have an option to choose what place they are to occupy in relation to state either as actors demanding accountability, as gap filler, or as a partner strengthening the state's own capacity.

Sen, (2003) stated that a study commissioned by the World Bank, according to (Siri, 2002:4) reaffirms that the NGO involvement has a real impact both on the demand and supply side of development. Equally they foster community participation to contribute to a better target and more effective and sustainable projects that will bring change in the community and improve living conditions.

2.5 Impacts of International and National NGOs on Cameroon Women

2.5.1 Mainstreaming women in Cameroon

Fonjong, (2001) states that NGOs might have done much to mainstream women in development in Cameroon .However efforts to meet women strategic gender needs for a long –term solution for empowerment has been very difficult. (Endeley, 1998) asserts that although most NGO have tried to move women from one level to another on the UNICEF empowerment ladder, it has only made most Cameroonian women to be better house wives, better farmers or better small traders than in the past when they were not empowered. This in other words implies that the level of poverty among women has been reduced without any significant change in their subordinate status. Therefore, without adequate empowerment women can hardly participate effectively in all spheres of national life. According to the (UNICEF report, 1993) this calls for the emergent need of NGOs and other agencies to compliment what other NGOs have done to ensure that women take part in decision- making. This of course requires a change of strategy and focus from most NGOs and greater support from other government and international agencies. Only then can the Cameroonian women talk of empowerment as conceived by the UNICEF framework.

According to (MinFi, 1999) the Cameroon government should take some positive measures to mainstream women. If these measures are sustained it will be capable of moving women through the UNICEF empowerment framework to the level of control.

For this reason the Ministry of social and women's affairs was created to cater for women's interest. A full Ministry of Women Empowerment centers was instituted throughout the country. It organized women and provided them with vocational trainings. To illustrate income –generating activities, family planning, sanitation and home management workshops were carried out to empower women. Most essentially training and information were the most important source of empowerment to the rural women. Thus they were the greatest victims of violence, lack of education, poverty and larger family sizes. (Fonjong, 2001).

Equally, (Siyam, 1997) states that in terms of higher education the government created a department of women and gender study at the University of Buea in Cameroon. It was aimed to encourage training of gender experts. This was the only such specialized department in West Africa that trained gender expert's. The students who were undergoing training in the Gender research department supported the government to convey gender awareness policies. They changed the existing gender stereotype policies and programmes in the country. This initiative targeted women in the tertiary sector. As a result it facilitated women participation in decision- making and control over resources.

Consequently such collective efforts and control of gender issues by the government and NGOs resulted to some positive outcome .Notably the results have been recorded

especially in the area of the education of the girls and women who now assert leadership positions. In 2000 in Cameroon, Universities in general including the University of Buea in particular, showed a remarkable increase in the percentage of female enrolment in Mathematics, Computer Studies, Business Studies and the Natural Sciences respectively (Siyam, 1997).

2.5.2 NGOs and Women Rights in Cameroon

According to the UNICEF framework, women in Cameroon lag behind as most NGOs do not address the right issues rather they provide basic needs and coping strategies for women. In order to adopt proper strategies to improve women rights, there is need to create “awareness “. This is because very few NGOs venture to make women identify their problems in Cameroon (UNICEF, 1993).

Similarly, the Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Cameroon has been raising public awareness for discrimination against women. FIDA organized workshops, debates and sketches that focus on: marriage, property rights and the law. Women are made to understand that girls have equal rights to education as boys. Next, in the case of a divorce, a full –time housewife is entitled to one- third of the family property or 50 percent of the property for any contribution made to an investment during marriage. Equally important FIDA also remarks that, not all cultural beliefs are acceptable. (Women Outlook, 1997: 5). The impact of FIDA is still limited to cities

because they have limited resources .For this reason FIDA is unable to penetrate into the interior where the greatest injustices to women's rights are often perpetuated. Even when workshops are organized in the provinces, many poor rural women do not attend because of transportation constraint.

Equally important the Association of Cameroon female Jurist seeks to fill in the gap created by FIDA's. According to (Fonchingong, 2002), it was more of a "meet the peoples approach". This group consists of a team of jurist who provide women with free legal consultation and counselling .They also run radio and television programmes women. These programmes are meant to redress many situations and create awareness on women rights. Cameroon women can now seek legal action on issues concerning family, property at divorce or death of their husband's and marriage rights. Added to the above the Association of Cameroon female Jurist go around the cities with mobile clinics that operates only on specific days. However they do not have staff and infrastructure to meet the demands of the growing public (Endeley, 1998).

In addition there was another women group of women who worked on the media, to empower women in Cameroon. That was the National Association of Professional Media Women (NAPMEW). They use audio-visual media to increase the support for equality in all sectors of the society. The NAPWEW group carried out such media programmes as "Calling the Women" and "Feminine Line" broadcasted on public media

to reach a sizable audience. These programme addressed issues such as marriage, property, political rights, circumcision, bride price and inheritance, with prominent public figure as guests (Akutu 1997: 5). However according to (Epie, 1997:37) there was a problem with the work schedule of many women. Notably few women had the time to listen to the radio .Another problem here is that the poorest households do not have radios. Most programs are broadcasted without consideration of women's household time schedules.

2.5.3 Cameroon women in politics

Endeley, (1998) states that progress for women in politics provided the women with the means and mobility necessary for political activities. These activities included welfare provisions, economic; empowerment, education, and the fight for other rights by NGOs who were instrumental in effective political participation. Thus (CAMNAFAW, 1998) remarks “political participation does not occur in a vacuum. Space must be conquered for it to be done”. Thus family is obviously the starting point for the progress into wider society. Women have to be involved in family decisions that affect their lives those of their children and the provision of family education to the target population (CAMNAFAW, 1988).

In addition if women participate in family decision- making, the impact will be more significant. This is because, if it is sustained and extended to other sectors of the society, then the political sphere where the core of empowerment lies will still not be a male monopoly. Cameroonian women are under –represented in parliament, cabinet, councils and ambassadorial international organizations (CAMNAFAW, 1988).

2.5.4 Women's employment income

Fonjong, (2001) asserts that unemployment is a major problem in Cameroon. The situation is not the same when analyzed along gender lines. The fact that women have fewer formal employment opportunities than men makes them a vulnerable social group. Consequently most women have gotten into prostitution and their exposure to the risk of AIDS and sexually transmitted disease has increased. This, in turn, diverts government's attention away from wider economic to social problems. In rural areas, teenage pregnancies and marriages are very common issues. This tends to widen the inequality gap as teenage marriages encourage girls to drop-out of school, while less boys drop out. To illustrate the result is that a higher proportion of boys are better skilled and more competitive on the job market than girls.

For this reason NGOs have tried to address women unemployment and poverty in various ways. Besides the credit opportunities for self-employment and trainings that allows women to compete for jobs with men. NGOs offer employment opportunities

(Endeley, 1998). They are generally more sympathetic to women in their jobs and scholarships opportunities. An example will be NGOs such as Living Earth, WWF, and HPI. They recruit women in their projects nations wide, as secretaries, animators and extension staff. On the contrary these casual jobs might not provide women with a stable and sustainable source of income. However they never provide women with a temporal source of earnings from which savings can be accrued for future investment in other income- generating ventures (Fonchingong, 2002).

Subsequently it is for this reasons that the public sector, local NGOs are mounting pressure for equal employment for women and men. The Cameroon women Caucus (CamWoCa) has recently launched a strategy to ensure that women occupy at least 40 percent of all the decision –making position in the country (Zih, 2001) .This involves lobbying state officials, private employers and International organizations to employ women (Inter press Service 1997).They also sensitize women to job and career opportunities through newsletters and workshops.

Never the less these employment opportunities attempt to satisfy women's practical gender needs such as access to employment. And they still concentrate on women in the lower echelon of society as secretaries and deputies. This of course is the result of the type of training offered to women by NGOs. They include: adult literacy, home economic, hygienic and sanitation .These trainings do not lift women up to high political

managerial or military positions of public responsibility, except in their traditional caring sector. Finally they will only make women better house wives (Fonjong, 2001).

Therefore, women's training should include areas traditionally reserved for men. (Fonchinong, 2002) agrees that this would not only generate employment but will also help to accomplish a practical gender need. Furthermore, for women to gain proper employment there is need to create social facilities such as provisions for family education that allows women to gain employment out of the home.

2.6 Women Economic participation in Cameroon

The catastrophic effects of the economic crisis in the late 1980s and the harsh adjustment measures that followed in the early 1990s, among other factors, encouraged the emergence of many NGOs in Cameroon. (Fonjong, 2001) Primarily Government influence has not been able to meet most of the basic needs of the people, leaving the population to take charge of their destiny through self reliant development and community groups. Therefore NGOs have been making efforts to reduce development gaps created. The NGOs focus on women during the economic crisis was crucial because women were more affected than men.

Consequently more women than men became unemployed. Equally household incomes fell, subsidies to agriculture became selective, and both men and women joined the informal sectors although women were majority. (Fonjong, 2001) Women needed assistance to find new survival strategies to maintain their crucial roles in society. These roles have been re-echoed by government emphasizes on the fact that “...The challenges overcoming the economic crisis and other types of crises in our society will be achieved with the Cameroon women or else it will not be achieved...” (Inter-press Services, 1997).

Equally important Richard, (2013) notes that women participation and inclusion in Cameroon is still very slow and difficult. This is due to socio- cultural, economic, political and legal factors. Much needs to be done by all the stakeholders to address women issues. For this reason the government needs to put more efforts in the implementation of laws on the protection and promotion of women. Equally the socio-cultural and economic obstacles should be resolved through various means such as:

(i) Education (ii) Training (iii) Provision of credit facilities (iv) Access to resource and (v) The inclusion of women in decision making positions.

According to Fonjong 2004, the informal Sector in Cameroon consists of a good number of activities. Notably, (Abonge, 2001) states that women entrepreneurs in Limbe are involved in hairdressing, small restaurants, roasting of fish by the road, small

mobile provision stores and crop trading. This implies that the women in the region have a wide range of informal sector activities from which they can choose.

Kamatu, (1992) states that such activities enable women in Limbe to reduce poverty at the house hold level. This brings exposes women economic contribution as essential for house hold survival in Cameroon. Thus the consistent efforts of women to assist in family responsibility, brings out their economic contribution in the society. However the low level of education and lack of adequate skills excludes women from profitable ventures (Fonjong, 2004)

2.7 Women's welfare and health concern in Cameroon

Firstly CARE, (1997) assert that a healthy population is a better labor force. The irony in Cameroon is that the government health expenditure continues to fall as a result of Structural Adjustment Plan. Women are those affected most because of their health needs such as maternity, child care, and STDs. Inadequate provisions for health care needs increased. CARE Cameroon has assisted the government in this domain by placing a particular focus on women since 1978. Thus CARE was established in Cameroon in some health projects in the Northern provinces where there was high densities and growth rate. (Endeley, 1998).

Additionally, it was for these reasons that the RPHC project was introduced to the Cameroonian women in the north. Subsequently the infant mortality rates have fallen because women in the north now receive maternity attention. Time and improvement in health has been gained which allows women to spend more productive hours with their children. Women health groups have become focused on issues such as: family planning, income generating activities, girls' education and marriage (CARE, 1997).

Therefore the Reorientation Primary Health Care (RPHC) programs covered maternal and child health. It was aimed at strengthening health delivery services for 75,000 inhabitants in two administrative areas (CARE, 1997). Equally through community discussions the urgent health needs of the inhabitants were identified as the absence of maternity facilities, lack of health care staffs and the non-functioning of health centers were noted and equipped, professional and health community workers were trained and the community management committees organized with the active involvement of women.

Equally important, the initiative by CARE targeted reproductive health. Its aim was to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and other STDs and unwanted pregnancies among over 84,000 girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 24 years. Equally important the teachers, field workers and peer educators were being trained to teach and create awareness on disease prevention and family planning. As a result they work in small groups which gave everyone the opportunity to participate. These women groups played

a significant role especially in Muslim communities to reduce early marriages and teen pregnancies (CARE, 1997).

In addition projects such as CARE have the potential to meet gender practical needs and transform the position of women because they work with small communities. Consequently (CARE, 1997) led to development through new skills. These skills enabled the community to achieve their needs and it contributed to the success of the project. However, the sector approach of most NGOs faced challenges hence the projects are not always comprehensive enough to meet the practical and strategic gender needs that is very important for women empowerment.

2.8 Shortcoming to women empowerment in Cameroon

For Fonjong, (2001) women face a dual role in both the family and the office. Women with entrepreneur skills will be as effective as the male counterpart if they are given more effective professional training in marketing, finance, and public relations. Therefore women need support from NGOs to guide them through business risk and how to plan carefully with expertise. However, the weaknesses of the sector approach of most NGOs is that projects are not always comprehensive enough to meet both the practical and strategic gender needs which are vital for women's empowerment (FIDA & Ngassa, 1999: ACAFEJ 1996).

Fonchingong & Fonjong, 2002 notes that women have been given low esteem in the society particularly in the domain of power and decision-making. According to (Kirk, 1995) he argues that the inferior power position of African women impacts negatively on the family. The women advocate for a change in the current men's negative perceptions of women's role in the sustainable management of natural resources.

In addition Longwe, (1991) among many others states that control over resources is the ultimate proof of women's economic, social and political empowerment. She sees the process of empowerment as enabling women to take an equal place with men. Equally important for women to participate in the development process, they need to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men (Longwe, 1991)

2.9 Limits of NGOs Effort in Cameroon

Women empowerment is fundamental in addressing gender issues such as discrimination and subordinations. However, (Fonjong, 2001) states that empowerment of women within the Cameroonian context is often mistaken as simply providing women's access to basic needs without having control over them. Subsequently this can be partly explained by the shortcomings of NGOs especially local NGOs which are at the forefront of helping women in the absence of an enabling environment.

Additionally, Zih (2000) posits that NGOs lack adequate funds because small funds received from donors are expected to be channelled through a well defined activity that must produce a specific set of outcomes. On the other hand, they face increased demand for funds from women to carry out small scale activities that must produce a specific set of outcomes. Equally, they face increase demands for funds from both donor agencies and beneficiaries. In order to produce their desired results they tend to give out very small amounts of loans. These loans support women only for welfare measure rather than engage in complex activities that empowers women (Endeley, 1998).

Equally important local NGOs working on gender issues often do not have trained skills. From a total of ten NGOs sampled, none had a gender expert. They tend to incorporate degree holders or retired agricultural extension workers in the social sciences. Most of their seminars therefore lack sophistication or elements of theoretical understanding. Moreover, many staff works on a voluntary basis (Fonjong, 2001).

Furthermore, UNDP, (1993) remarks that the absence of enough funds and qualified staffs is compounded by the problem of logistics. They work without basic office infrastructure. As such they encountered many delays in communicating with their targeted population. However this might not be a serious problem to international NGOs such as CARE. It is a serious problem to local NGOs like SLF and CAMCCUL. Equally important, some NGOs work in the field without concerted action programs. Meanwhile others seem to be fighting with the communities instead of to work together

through a network of empowerment for the community (Fonjong, 2001). Under such conditions NGOs can only meet the short term needs of the women. This has led to empowerment at the welfare and access levels, which of course should not be the goal of development projects and programs, but they should aim to reach the levels of empowerment and control.

2.10 Causes of poverty among women in Cameroon

For Sikod, (2007) women lack of education in Cameroon is influenced by some socio economic reasons. As a result of the economic crisis, poverty in Cameroon has put people in a situation of scarce means. This has encouraged parents to enrol boys rather than girls in school. Hence girls are destined to marry and leave the family as they continuously do most of the house hold chores in their marital homes. Meanwhile boys get educated. Additionally, on the socio cultural level, Cameroonian women lack education because some parents see no advantage in sending their children to school. They fear the risk of making their children not to respect culture. As a matter of fact they prefer to teach the young girls rural work and initiate them into their future responsibility as mothers. With such cultural believes in Cameroon efforts towards empowering women will take a long time to be realized. For this reason the Beijing Platform for Action, calls on the government to analyze from a gender perspective, policies and programs in Cameroon related to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, external debt problems, taxation, investments, employment, markets and all

relevant sectors of the economy with respect to their impact on poverty, inequality and particularly on women to assess and adjust their family wellbeing, status and hence promote more equitable distribution of productivity wealth assets, opportunities, income and services (United Nations, 1996: 40).

Cheke, (1996) posits that women subordination is reinforced by socio-cultural values and customary legal laws in Cameroon. Among some tribes, the education of girls can be an impediment to marriage. Hence some parents believe that when a girl child goes to school most often they do not get married early. As a result parents prefer to keep their daughters uneducated. Instead these young girls are being prepared for early marriage as patriarchal practices recommends. Consequently in a long term this sustains high rates of illiteracy among women. Most significantly it contributes to the lack of financial independence and poverty among women in Cameroon.

In addition Cheka (1996) states that the statutory and customary laws in Cameroon are silent on women rights to own land. This is because the Article 1421 of the French Civil Code, gives men more powers to manage property held in common ownership of the spouse. For this reason, husbands have the powers to sell property that is held in common ownership with the spouse without her consent. Meanwhile under Customary Laws a woman's role is limited to working for her husband and bearing children. Notably, (Cheka, 1996) concluded that the Statutory Laws in Cameroon used the capacity of marriage to keep women in position of dependence on their husbands. This

resulted to poverty among Cameroon women since they are unable to use property held in common ownership as collateral for a bank loan. (Cheka, 1996)

The research study attempts to analyze the impact of V.G.F to alleviate poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe Cameroon. Hence some scholars claim that although women have made an important stride in the professions, business, and government, the majority of women are still concentrated in agriculture and microenterprise (Garba, 1999: Nzomo, 1995: Pereira, 2003: Bagile, 2002-2003). For this reason women are considered poor. This is evident in Women in Limbe who are entrepreneurs indulged in informal sector activities such as (i) Hair dressing, (ii) Small restaurants and (iii) Roasting of fish on the roadside, (iv) Small mobile provision stores, (v) Food crop trading and (vi) Fuel wood trading. Hence (Abonge, 2001) remarks that food crop enterprise belongs to very low-income groups. This does not permit such groups to get into sophisticated economic activities that require much capital.

2.11 International frame works on women empowerment

Beijing Platform for Action.

The evolution from Women in Development approach (WID), to Gender and Development approach (GAD), proposed the process leading to the Beijing Conference. Thus WID approach treated women issues based on major development concerns such as human rights issues, democratic governance, and protection of environment,

globalization, and peace. Meanwhile the gender and development approach sought to integrate gender awareness and competence into mainstreaming development. Therefore the GAD approach envisaged empowerment on women as a means for women to participate in decision making bodies and control the distribution of resources. The Common Wealth Plan of Action, remarks that WID approach focused on how women could be better integrated into existing “men/ male world” .This approach was characterized by income generating projects which failed to address the causes of gender inequality (Common Wealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, 1995).

According to (Johnson, n.d. p. 148), Cameroon women need to be empowered to reduce poverty. Thus empowerment gives women control over different aspects. Equally it improves their performance within the existing gender divisions of labour and gender needs in education. The Cameroon government efforts to protect women rights included the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Cameroon in 1995. According to (BPFA, 1995) at the fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in September 1995, government delegates from 189 states adopted some consensus as BPFA declarations. The declarations were endorsed by the UN General Assembly in December 1995. Equally there was a statement of political commitment by participating governments to advance the goals of equality, and peace for all women. In addition BPFA was aimed to ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and girls. Cameroon signed the Beijing Platform for Action, in 1995. Besides Beijing Platform for Action, other international instruments had been signed to advance

women's rights and fight discrimination against women. These included the Universal declaration of Human Rights (1979), the Nairobi Forward- looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993, and the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development (Neba, 1994).

The Beijing Platform for Action represents the strategies put in place in order to guide the government towards a greater implementation of international commitments to empower women and put an end to discriminations against women in the legal and cultural institutions. This was aimed to advance women participation in the society by implementing programmes to alleviate poverty with adequate educational training for women to improve their status.

Electra Institute for Southern Africa

The researcher used the Conference Proceeding Report for the Electra Institute for Southern Africa to show the importance of women empowerment in the study. (EISA Symposium in search of sustainable democratic governance for Africa).

The EISA Conference was held in South Africa in 2007. During the Conference Sheila Bunware from the University of Mauritius stated that “one strategy to institute sustainable development in Africa is to eradicate poverty and make gender inclusive in democratic developmental states. She acknowledges that despite the many good commitments by leaders and different lobby groups to change women's lives on the continent, women still remained worse off in their social and economic status. As a

result, governments continued to commit themselves to international and regional instrument that seek to protect and promote women's rights. Meanwhile there has been little implementation at the national level. Consequently there is an emergent need for gender inclusion in development by eliminating illiteracy among poor women" (EISA, 1996).

Therefore the states, must remove legal obstacles and cultural constraints to women's access to control of productive resources. This calls for the need of a gendered analysis of poverty eradication programmes and a much more gendered governance agenda. (EISA, 1996).

The Voice of Grace Foundation is a charity organization that supports the efforts among women in Limbe to eradicate poverty. To improve the living condition of women V.G.F provided capacity building and seed capital for income generation. The responses from the questionnaires and data from a desk study guided the researcher to review the contribution of NGO sector to the welfare of women efforts to alleviate poverty

Human Right Conventions against all forms of Discriminations against Cameroon Women (CEDAW)

The preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon states that human beings without distinction of race religion, belief posses inalienable and sacred rights. Article 1(2) ensures equality of all citizens before the law (Ibid, p.81). However discriminatory

administrative policies, practises, laws and cultural beliefs hinder women enjoyment of human rights in Cameroon. The Cameroon government has done nothing to change these practise, and attitudes against women. Notably with the creation of the Ministry of Women Affairs, some women right activists report states that it is a step to fight the wide spread practises of forced marriages, traditional discriminatory legal and customary laws.

The Committee on Economic social and cultural Rights in Cameroon was updated and reformed for the June 2000 CEDAW reviews on Cameroonian women. However an analysis of the legal, socio- economic and political status of women in Cameroon shows the link between the high levels of violence against women and their low status in all aspects of life. The legal context of family life and law affects women's socio economic status and women access to education. Equally important the ethnic diversity in Cameroon gives importance to local traditions which widely affects the status of women and their enjoyment of human rights (Ibid, 2002)

2.12 Summary

This chapter was guided by Sen., Theory on poverty. The theory was used to show the relationship between NGOs and women empowerment .Equally there was a review of the contribution of the feminist social theory on the importance of women empowerment. The section equally saw the history of the NGO sector on Cameroonian

women, and the causes of poverty among women in Cameroon. Also the relevance of conceptual framework and a framework for consideration was done.

CHAPTER 3: RESEACRH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the research design and method used in the study to gather information. This chapter outlines the research design, and instruments used during the study. It will reflect the plans as to how data will be collected, analysed and presented.

3.1 Research design

According to (Robson 1993: Dolly 2001) research design consist of plans that guide the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose. The research design refers to the process of investigation. This involves how data is to be collected, presented, analyzed and interpreted to provide the answers to the research problem. The researcher used a qualitative method approach in order to effectively cover the research objective for the study. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006), notes that qualitative approach offers more detail about a subject under consideration. These methods enable the researcher to obtain empirical evidence on the contribution of NGO sector to the welfare of Cameroonian women in their efforts to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth among women in Limbe Cameroon.

3.2 Methodology

Maree, (2007) states that the quantitative approach will bring out the relationship between variables and generalise the result to the main population while the qualitative approach enables the researcher to acquire an in depth understanding of the respondent's experiences and perceptions.

According to (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) qualitative research focus on interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings, and in terms of the meanings that people bring to these settings. Qualitative research involves collecting information about personal experiences, life story, historical interactions and visual text which are significant moments and meaningful in people's lives. Meanwhile (Grove & Burn, 2005) remarks that quantitative approach is used to describe variables, to examine relationship among variables and to determine the cause and effect interactions between variables. The researcher asked for the personal opinion of the sampled population. This made the qualitative method suitable to collect relevant empirical data.

Qualitative methods are increasingly gaining preference because they foreground the experiences and voices of the research participants meanwhile the quantitative approach enables the researcher to quantify the relationship between variables. Equally they incorporate other important factors that define the everyday life practices of women and men (Echo Magazine 2001: Shettima, 1998).The qualitative method gave the researcher

an understanding of the experiences faced by poor women in Limbe. It also enabled the researcher to understand the causes of poverty among women and the programmes put in place by Voice of Grace Foundation to alleviate poverty among women in Limbe. This method is relevant to the research study thus it set a base for the answers to the research questions under study. However although the mixed methods differs on how they access knowledge and the research question, they are both complementary and they provide a complete analysis of the research problem. Therefore this method assisted the researcher to create a holistic understanding of the impact of NGO programmes alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe Cameroon.

3.3 Population

According to Pilot & Hungler (1992), the population is referred to as the totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. This refers to all the existing members of the group under study. In this research study, the population constituted of the staff and women at the Voice of Grace Foundation. The researcher targeted 50 participants, distributed as 25 staff and 25 women. The staff in the study included both the voluntary and permanent staff. The researcher chose the sampled group because they have an in depth knowledge about the Voice of Grace Foundation programmes, through their experiences with the organization. Equally important the activities of the participants such as the type of work enable the researcher to determine the extent to which Voice of Grace Foundation programmes contribute to alleviate poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe Cameroon. The populations' size paved

the way for the researcher to analyse the programmes implemented by V.G.F to support the efforts of women alleviating poverty in Limbe. Thus without these population the researcher might not have been able to explore the role the participants play to bring out the efforts of NGO sector to improve the welfare of women in Limbe Cameroon.

3.4 Sampling process

Kerlinger, (1986) defines purposive sampling as a type of non –probability sampling which uses judgment and deliberate efforts to obtain representative samples in an area or group .Sample is a smaller portion of the population selected using some systematic procedures as representative of that population.

The researcher used a purposive sampling to enable the researcher target the staff, and the women benefiting from Voice of Grace Foundation programmes to alleviate poverty. The researchers choose this sample population because they are reliable for the study. The sample under study will consist of 25 staff both voluntary and permanent and 25 women benefiting from the V.G.F programmes. Therefore a total of 50 samples will be used in the study to avoid bias in the outcome of their responses. The researcher used purposive sampling in order to purposely target the women and the staff of the NGO. Hence their contribution to the study will assist the researcher to analyze the role of the NGO sector especially the Voice of Grace Foundation in alleviating poverty among women Limbe.

3.5 Sampling procedure

The researcher sought the assistance of the Director of V.G.F, the staff both permanent and voluntary and the women who are beneficiaries of the organization in order to identify the key informants. They were chosen because of their involvement in poverty reduction to improve living conditions.

The researcher was not able to meet the informants as was planned. The researcher appointed a research assistance, who will explain the research topic to the participants and distribute questionnaires for the study. The research assistance equally asked the participations under study if they wanted to take part in the research study. When the participants accepted to take part in the study, the researcher instructed the researcher assistance to agree on a date that will be convenient for the participants to fill the questionnaires.

3.6 Questionnaire

According to Breakwell, Hammond, & Schaw, (1995), they indicate that questionnaire is a common tool used to gather data in research. This instrument was chosen because it can be applied to many people for a given budget. Notably the use of questionnaires in research has lowered cost as compared to other data collection techniques.

In this research the questionnaire was designed to cover such areas as: (i) Personal details of the participant, (ii) There were questions that explored the hardship faced by Cameroonian women in Limbe. (iii) Equally important the questionnaires analyzed the role played by V.G.F programmes as intervention to the hardship faced by Cameroonian women who are alleviating poverty in Limbe. (iv) Equally important the questionnaire reviewed the contribution of the NGO sector to the welfare of women in their efforts to alleviate poverty.

Notably the questionnaire was written down in English Language. However because the women concerned in the study are not very educated, couple with the many different local languages in Cameroon, the questionnaire was translated into Pidgin English, a language commonly spoken by the majority of people in Limbe. The language is a combination of English language and some local dialects.

3.7.1 Primary Data

The researcher used questionnaires, to obtain primary data. The questionnaires included a closed and open-ended question design. The questionnaires enabled the researcher to get an in depth understanding of the contribution of V.G.F programmes to support Cameroonian women alleviate poverty in Limbe.

3.7.2 Secondary data.

The researcher consulted secondary sources from a desk study including: library, books, internet sources, articles, and journals. All these were used to understand the programmes that were initiated by V.G.F to alleviate poverty among women as well as to determine the extent to which V.G.F programmes contributed to promote the welfare of women in Limbe in order to promote economic growth. The researcher used the Voice of Grace Foundation Annual Conference Journal (2011-2012) to indicate the prospect on how the women improved their living conditions. Meanwhile it equally enabled the researcher to understand the challenges faced by the participants and the organisation as a whole, which hindered the NGO from supporting the effort among Cameroonian women to alleviate poverty in Limbe.

3.8 Data Collection procedure

Polit & Hungler (1999), define data as information obtained in a course of a study. The researcher used questionnaires and desk study. To obtain primary source of data, the researcher sought permission from the Director of V.G.F and the participants of the targeted population. The researcher used a research assistant who visited the organization to seek the consent of the Director and participants under study. The research assistant arranged a day with the consent of the participants. On that day the research assistant equipped with questionnaires, visited the Voice of Grace Foundation and distributed the questionnaires to the participants under study to kindly complete.

This process went on for two weeks since it was not possible for all the participants to be present at V.G.F Head office on the appointed date. This was as a result of the time schedule for the occupations of the participants. At the end of the session, the research assistant immediately sent the filled questionnaires to the researcher through a fast mail service. However the translated questionnaires intended for the women had an impact on the study .Hence it facilitated understanding of the questions. This assisted the researcher to get reliable answers to the research questions from the participant's views.

3.9 Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed data using the statistical package for social sciences. The collected data was organized into themes and coded accordingly. The researcher analyzed the questionnaires using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) in order to organize and classify the responses from the participants into different categories to answer the research questions. The researcher chose this method in order to respond to the research questions without discarding unique views that were being given by the participants. To analyze the questionnaire with a manual analysis could have been time consuming to complete the research study. The researcher equally used this method to indicate frequencies, percentages and the relationship between variables. The data was presented using tables, charts, and graphs to make the answers to the research question visible.

3.10 Ethical consideration

The following research principles were adhered to in the course of this research to safeguard the rights of individuals and institutions.

Consent: according to Drew (1985:45) consent involves respondent's choice to participate in a study. In the course of this study, consent will be obtained from the individual respondents for the basis of their participation. This is essential to ensure that the respondents participate voluntarily in the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The researcher will explain to the respondent that their response will be treated with confidentiality and used strictly for this research which is academic and that their names will not be revealed or used in writing of the research report.

Do no harm: the researcher will take the necessary measure to ensure that no physical, emotional or psychological harm comes to the respondents.

Respect for Individual Autonomy: the researcher will inform the respondents that they are free to decide to continue or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason even when consent has been giving.

3.11 Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the data collection and the method used for the data analysis. Equally it provides answers to the research objectives and spells out the data collection procedures. The researcher employed a qualitative method of research. Chapter 4 discussed the data analysis and the findings.

3.12 Conclusion

The chapter described the research methodology. The principle of beneficence, human dignity and justice was respected. Although the researcher was not present on the field, the researcher kept contact with the research assistance to make sure that the participants were morally and ethically protected. The data collection plans and the data analysis procedure was explained in the chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings, from the analysis of the impact of V.G.F programmes in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe Cameroon. The women receiving empowerment at V.G.F were chosen to represent women in the south west region of Cameroon. The findings will therefore indicate the impact of V.G.F programmes to support the efforts among women in Limbe to reduce poverty. The data was collected using the Voice of Grace Foundation as the main case study. The sample size comprised of the staff of the organization and the women receiving empowerment. The researcher used questionnaire guide and secondary data collection method to derive information for the study. The respondents views were used to answer the research questions and objective of the study in the following order: The research findings are presented beginning with the personal information of the participants in the study. The next category of questions presented the findings on the economic hardship encountered by women in Limbe. Thirdly the next category of questions presents findings on the NGOs intervention through its programmes to reduce poverty while the last category of questions examines the contribution of Voice of Grace Foundation to the welfare of women alleviating poverty in Limbe. Meanwhile there were also challenges faced by the organization and the women alleviating poverty in Limbe.

4.1 Distribution by Designation

According to the results on figure 1, the researcher targeted 50 respondents as sample size for the two categories of Cameroonians. Primarily to understand the hardship of women in Limbe, the researcher used the type of work and number of hours of work per day a week that the women did in the informal sector. Equally important the income that the women in Limbe derived and their health conditions were used to demonstrate the economic hardship faced by the women. Despite the fact that women work for long hours, they earned very low income that was not adequate to satisfy their living expenses.

From the 50 questionnaires distributed the researcher received 35 respondent's views. The 35 responses constituted of 14 responses from the staff representing 40% and 21 responses from the women, representing 60%. The figure below presents a distribution of 35 respondents that make up 100 % of the targeted sample of 50 questionnaires that the researcher had hoped for the sample group of the study. The figure below summarizes the respondent's category.

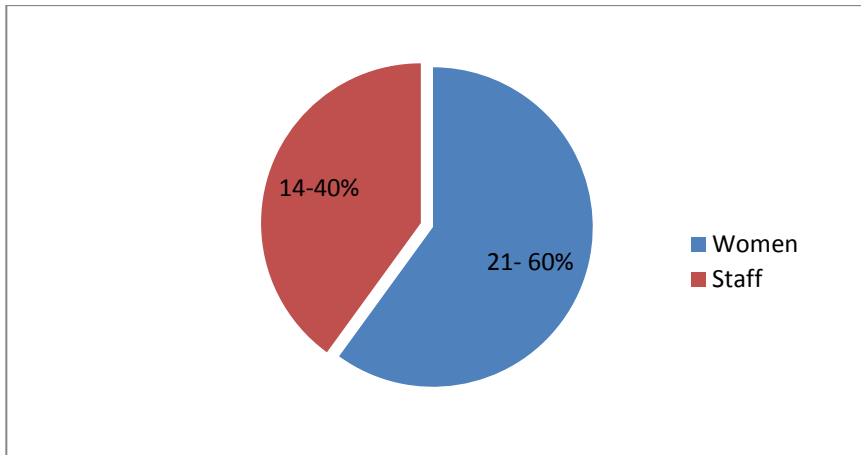


Figure 1: Distribution Design

4.2 Construction of Concept

There is need to understand that women empowerment by NGO programmes is an effort to support women to reduce poverty .The study attempts to show that women are not recognized, which is an external threat to national unity. For this reason, it will urge the general public to collectively advocate for the importance of providing women with education. Hence it will empower women to participate in the Structural Adjustment Plan for poverty eradication as stipulated by the (World Bank, 2000) and (Millennium Development Goal, 2002) in Cameroon.

4.2.1 Participants responses to questionnaires

The total number of 35 participant's views and a desk study data was gathered to be able to analyze the role of V.G.F in alleviating poverty among women in Limbe. The questionnaires were designed to set the basis for further responses relating to the research questions. The questionnaires were divided into three sections respectively. The section A comprised of the personnel information of the respondents such as the gender, age, marital status and professional qualification while the Section B and C comprised of the questions on the research study.

4.2.2 The Personal Information of Participants

Category of gender	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
Male	14	40.0
Female	21	60.0
Total	35	100%

Table 1: Gender/Sex Category

The findings summarized in the table above presents the gender of the respondents. The study focused on gender in Cameroon which is a patriarchal society. Although Cameroonian women constitute of 52% of the entire population they are not recognized

as a result of patriarchal dominations discriminatory cultural and legal laws of the country which favours men than women. (Takwa, 2009). The Gender table below indicates the women as majority at the V.G.F in Limbe Cameroon. However their participation is not recognized because they are considered poor and less educated.

Category of Age

Category of Age	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
18-34	21	60.0
35-40	8	22.9
45-50	4	11.4
55 above	2	5.7
Total	35	100%

Table 2: Age of Respondents

The findings summarized on table 2, presents the respondent's category of age .These Indicates that the respondents have all come up to an age of maturity. Thus the age group of the respondents shows that they are all mature and responsible to participate in the research study. Equally important they understand the questions and the gap the research study intends to bring on the welfare of Cameroonian women in Limbe.

Category of marital status

Category of marital status	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
Married	24	68.6
Single	11	31.4
Total	35	100%

Table 3: Marital Status

The respondent's opinions on the table 3 indicate that 68.6 % of the respondents in the study are married while 31.4% of the respondents are single. This indicates that the respondents are mature enough to understand the experiences of patriarchal domination as well as customary and legal laws of marriage in Cameroon that favors men than women.

Category of children

Category of Children	Respondents	Percentage
0-2	15	42.9
2-4	12	34.3
4 and above	8	22.9
Total	35	100%

Table 4: Number of Children

According to table 4 the findings from the questionnaires indicate that the respondents were parents with children ranging from 0-2 which represented 49.9 % of the response rate. Meanwhile from the range of 2-4 children the response rate was 34.3% and for the respondents with 4 children and above the response rate was 22.9% making up 100%. This indicated that the respondents needed to reduce poverty to improve living conditions and take of the needs of their children.

Category of qualification

Table 5: Category of Professional qualification

Category of qualification	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
“O”Level	2	5.7
“A” Level	6	17.1
Diploma	3	8.6
Degree	5	14.3
Others	19	54.3
Total	35	100%

The table 5 findings on professional qualification, presents the professional qualification of respondents. This shows the different level of literacy rate within the respondents

under study. The respondents with ‘O’ represents 5.2%, while those with ‘A’ make up 17.1% then Diploma 8.6% and Others represents 54.3% .Notably the respondents under the qualification with ‘Others’ are majority. They indicate the percentage of women who are illiterates and those with just First School Leaving Certificate. The respondent’s category of education reflects the gap that exists between men and women at V.G.F in Limbe. In order to alleviate poverty in Limbe Cameroon there is need for a collective effort to fill this gap. Thus women in Limbe need to be educated to reduce poverty adequately.

Category of Years

Number of Years	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
1 year	6	17.1
1-2 years	9	25.7
3-5 years	12	34.3
5 years above	8	22.9
Total	35	100%

The findings on respondent’s views in the category of years of experience, indicates that they have an in depth understanding of the NGO programmes. The respondents opinion will further the research study thus they understand the programmes of the NGO better.

The response rate indicates the following percentages. 17.1% of the respondents indicated that they had a year experience, while 25.7% claimed that they have been with the NGO for 1-2 years, then 34.3 % of the respondents indicated 3-5 years and 22.95 % indicated that for 5 years and above. This shows that the respondents were not new in the NGO. Consequently they understand how the organization runs its programmes to support the efforts among women to alleviate poverty in Limbe.

4.2.3 The Hardship Faced by Women in Limbe

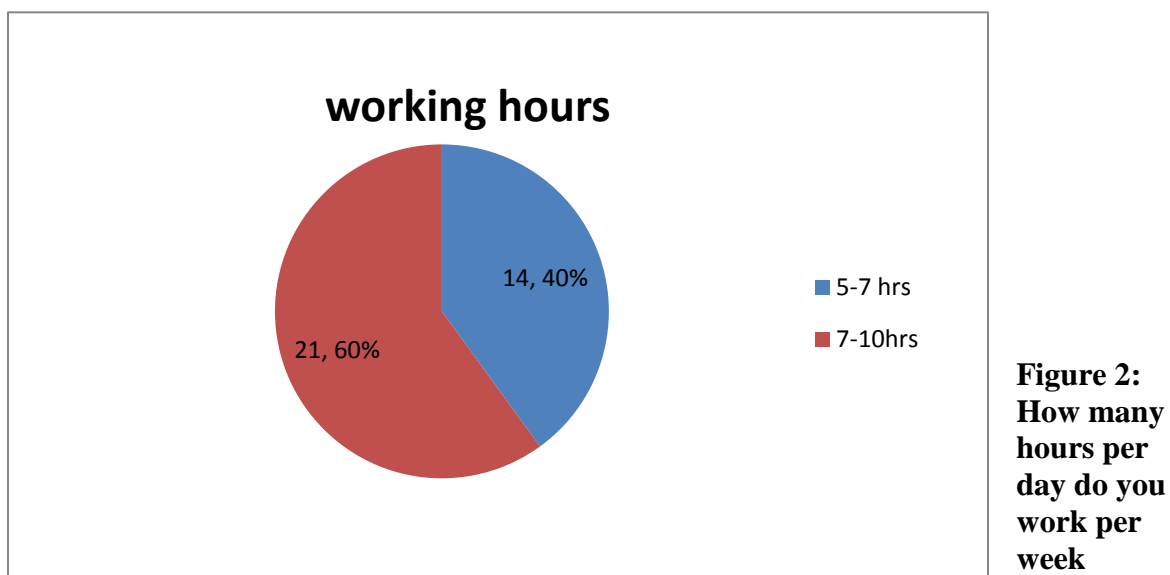
Category of work

Category of work	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
Staff	13	37.1
Farmer	6	17.1
Seamstress	3	8.6
Jobless	4	11.4
small business	3	8.6
Hair dressing	3	8.6
Teacher	1	2.9
Secretary	2	5.7
Total	35	100%

Table 6: what work do you do and how many hours per day do you work per week

According to the findings from the questionnaires 37.1 % of the responds rate shows that the respondents were made up of male staff which included both voluntary and permanent. Meanwhile the other respondents who were women constituted of the following jobs respectively: farmers made up 17.1% of the response rate, Seamstress m 8.6% of the response rate, then the unemployed constituted of 11.4 %. Meanwhile the respondents in small business constituted of 8.6% while the Hair dressers constitute of 8.6% and teacher 2.9 % while the secretaries constituted of 5.7 % of the response rate making up 100%. From the findings as indicated by respondents, the researcher could identity that the majority of the women were mostly based in the informal sector jobs such as farming, Hair dressing and small businesses. Meanwhile the highest category of work for the women was a teacher and secretary who were equally dissatisfied with their living standards and earnings. This shows the consequences of lack of education on women in Limbe. Hence a majority of the women under study are concentrated in the informal sector jobs. For this reason it is difficult for Cameroonian women in Limbe reduce poverty effectively.

Category of working hours per day per week



The figure 2 on working hours per day a week of the respondents has been used in the study to demonstrate the hardship on the respondents who are trying to reduce poverty in Limbe Cameroon. From the response of the respondents, the table shows that the respondents, who worked from 5-7 hours a day per week, make up 40.0% of the response rate. While the majority of the response rate that make up 60.0% of the response rate are the women who work for 7-10 hours a day per week. This shows that although the respondents were not satisfied with what they earned as income. Yet they put in much time in the work they do to sustain a living. Additionally despite the long working hours by the respondents most of them claimed that they could not afford to take care of their needs, and families as a result of poverty.

Women satisfaction with their income

Category of response	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
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No	35	100%
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Table 7: Is the money you earn adequate for your living expenses?

The Table 8 indicates the respondent rate of satisfaction with their earnings. All the respondents said they were not satisfied with the money they earned thus it was not enough to satisfy their expenses. This shows the high level of poverty in Limbe where the women are the most vulnerable to poverty. The fact that women in Limbe lack adequate education to qualify for jobs in the formal sector, they are more concentrated in the informal sector in farming, Hair dressing, and small businesses. Equally most of them lack basic skills in business management as a result their businesses do not yield much that can sustain their living expenses. Meanwhile on the other hand a good number of the staff working with the organization worked on voluntary basis. This explains why most of the respondents complained of not being satisfied with their earnings. This also exposes the level of hardship the women in Limbe are undergoing. The type of work done by the women was not adequate to support their family needs. Meanwhile others were jobless and even lacked capital to start a business, others lacked income generating skills. This explains why the response rate as to whether the respondents were satisfied with their earnings all of them said “No” they were not satisfied. Therefore this resulted to a response rate of 100%, which indicated total dissatisfaction with their economic conditions.

Health Condition of Participants

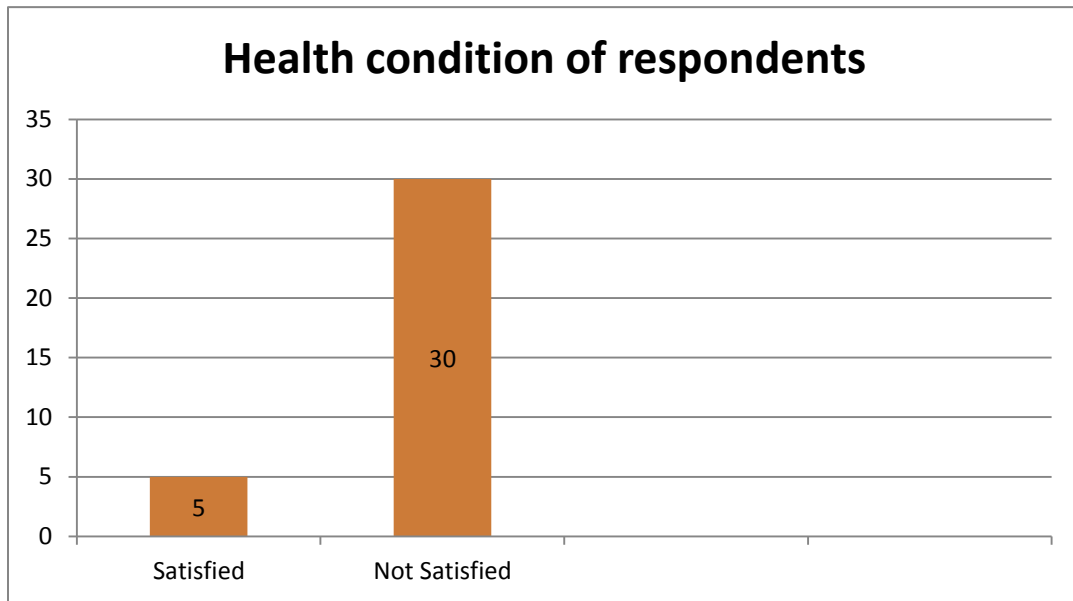


Figure 3: what is your health condition, Are you satisfied with it or not?

How do you work to improve your health condition?

The figure represents the respondents' view on health conditions and what the respondents are doing to improve their health. From the research findings 14.3% of the respondents were satisfied with their health condition. Meanwhile a majority of the respondents making up 85.7 % said they were not satisfied with their health condition. Most of the respondents depended on the capacity and skills they derived from V.G. F to take care of their health condition. According to the responses from the questionnaires most of the respondents claimed that V.G.F provided free medical facilities and health

education through workshops on how to improve health conditions. This shows the Voice of Grace Foundation commitment to improve the health standard of respondents besides supporting women to reduce poverty.

Respondent's knowledge of NGO Sector.

Category of responds	Respondents(F)	Percentage
Yes	35	100%

Table 8 : Knowledge of NGO

During the research findings, the questionnaires indicated that all 35 respondents understood what an NGO is all about and the gap it fills to support needy people in the community to eradicate poverty and improve living conditions. The respondents view gave the researcher a 100% respond rate .Thus all the respondents indicated in their responses that an NGO is a non profit making organization that helps to improve the living standards of vulnerable and less privileged people in the society through its programmes to improve living condition

Knowledge about Voice of Grace Foundation

Category of respond on knowledge about V.G.F	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	100%

Table 9: Knowledge of the Voice of Grace Foundation

The Table presents the respondents opinion on their knowledge about V. G. F as an NGO. All the respondents said “YES” they know the NGO called V.G.F. This enabled the researcher to be certain with the responses that came from the respondents. The fact that the respondents had knowledge about the activities of V.G.F to support efforts among Cameroonian women in Limbe to reduce poverty means the response rate was 100%.

Importance of the Voice of Grace Foundation

Category of importance of V.G.F	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
Improved status	2	5.7
Employment	28	80.0
Improved Health	3	8.6

Education	2	5.7
Total	35	100%

Table 10: Importance of V.G.F

The Table 11 indicates the respondents' views on the different ways by which V.G.F had been important in their lives. According to responses 2.5% of the respondents said the NGO improved their life status through capital to start a self support income generating project. Similarly other respondents indicated that they did not have money to pay school fees for their children but V.G.F offered them scholarship grants for school fees. Similarly 80% of the respondent's claimed that the Voice of Grace Foundation enabled them to gain self-employment.

Role of Voice of Grace Foundation programmes to alleviate poverty among women in Limbe

Number of Years of V.G.F Empowerment

Category of Years	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
5-10	35	100%

Table 11: Number of year's women in Limbe have been empowered?

The respondent's opinions on the length of time V.G.F has been empowering women are equally important in the research study. Notably it helped the researcher to understand the length of time the NGO has been offering its services to support the effort of women to reduce poverty in Limbe. According to the response, all the respondents assumed that the NGO has been empowering women in Limbe for over 5-10 years. The length of time the organization has been empowering women in Limbe equally brings out the commitments of the organization in its objective to support women alleviate poverty. Equally it will enable the researcher to observe the impact it programmes has on women alleviating poverty in Limbe Cameroon.

Category in number of women	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
40-80	32	91.4
80 and above	3	8.6
Total	35	100%

Table 12: Number of women empowered by V.G.F in a year

The Table 13 confirmed that V.G.F is empowering women every year in Limbe. According to the responses 91.4 % of the respondents said V.G.F empowers over 40-80

women a year meanwhile 8.6% of the respondent claimed that V.G.F empowers 80 women and above a year in Limbe. The fact that majority of the respondents claimed that the NGO empowers 40-80 percent shows that the organization is changing the lives of a good number of Cameroonian women in their efforts to eradicate poverty in Limbe Cameroon.

4.2.4 Contribution of Voice of Grace Foundation to the welfare of women to promote economic growth in Limbe.

Impact of Voice of Grace Foundation Empowerment on women

Category of response	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
Yes	35	100%

Table 13: Impact of V.G.F empowerment on women

The table 14 presents the findings on the impact of V.G.F empowerment among women in Limbe. All the respondents said “Yes” V.G.F programmes have impact on women. The response gave the researcher a 100% response rate. The opinion of the respondents reflected the role of V.G.F programmes to improve the living conditions among women in Limbe.

In addition the researcher used a computed source of data from (V.G.F, Annual Conference Report Journal 2011-2012) to analyze the impact of V.G.F programme on

women. According to the computed source, V.G.F programs empowered women with seed capital grants to generate income for projects to reduce poverty in Limbe. To illustrate the NGO provided empowerment grants to a number of beneficiaries to carry out activities ranging from fabric manufacturing, and embroidery. The women in Limbe are now capable i) To pay school fees for their children, ii) Take care of their health. Meanwhile more beneficiaries are undergoing trainings on self employment. Equally important, in 2011 the NGO programmes played a significant role to alleviate poverty through activities; ranging from skill strengthening to micro enterprise development. Source: (V.G.F Annual Conference Report Journal, 2011-2012).

Role of V.G.F to improve living standard

Category of response	Respondents(F)	Percentage
Yes	35	100%

Table 14: Impact of V.G.F empowerment on living standard of Cameroonian Women

Table 15 presents the results from the questionnaires on whether the Voice of Grace Foundations empowerment programme has any impact on the living standard of the Cameroonian women in Limbe. The findings showed that all 35 respondents indicated

that “Yes” the empowerment programme of V.G.F had an impact on women in Limbe Cameroon. The response from the questionnaires therefore makes up 100% of the response rate. The researcher used this question to show the role of V.G.F to support women in Limbe to alleviate poverty .From the answers in the questionnaires all of the respondents said the NGO was improving life standards among the women in Cameroon through small loans, seed capital, and capacity building for income generating projects and medical grants. Added to the above the respondents claimed that the empowerment programmes by V.G.F built in the women the capacity to be self-employed through vocational trainings in project such as: Poultry, and Piggery.

Improvement on the economic situation of women in Limbe

Category of response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	35	100%

Table 15: V.G.F improvement on the economic situation of women in Limbe

Table 16 presents the findings on the state of V.G.F programmes to improve the economic situation of women in Limbe. The response rate from the questionnaires indicated that most of the respondents indicated that “Yes” the Voice of Grace Foundation programmes improved the living standards among women in Limbe

Cameroon. This gave the researcher a response rate of 100%. According to (V.G.F Annual Conference Report, 2011-2012) the NGO organized “vocational training programmes” as a key strategy to alleviate poverty. These programmes included: skills, trainings and job mentoring through seminars aimed to support women on how to fight poverty. Hence in the years under review in this area, over fifteen candidates were trained in 2011 as compared to eight in 2010 giving a percentage increase of 30.43% in this project area. Even though, this required a huge budget from the organization, they are doing quite much to see that the goal of this particular activity is attained despite the financial constraints faced by the organization (Voice of Grace Foundation Annual Conference Report Journal 2011-2012).

Women benefits from V.G.F programmes

Category of benefits	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
Skills	5	14.3
Loans	9	25.7
Education	2	5.7
Jobs	19	54.3
Total	35	100%

Table 16: Benefit from V.G.F programmes

The Table 17 indicates what benefits the Voice of Grace Foundation offers to the respondents. The results from the questionnaires indicated that 14.3% of the respondents benefited from V.G.F programmes through skills to eradicate poverty. While 25.7% of the respondents indicated that they were empowered through loans which supported their micro businesses. Meanwhile 5.7% of the respondent claimed that they gained awareness in towards understanding women rights and health concerns. To illustrate V.G.F programmes created awareness on HIV AIDS and STDS to improve living conditions. Added to the above some respondents claimed that besides paying school fees for their children, they gained skills via capacity building, vocational trainings for skills enhancement and job monitoring trainings. This enabled respondents to gain economic independence to create jobs and reduce poverty.

The researcher used a few success stories from the V.G.F Annual Conference Report for (2011- 2012) to indicate how the efforts of V.G.F programmes improved the lives of the women in Limbe. A beneficiary from V.G.F programmes indicated that the organizations programmes enabled her to send her daughter to school. This woman and her and her daughter claimed to be living on the street but thanks to V.G.F support they no longer lived on the street. Therefore she can send her daughter to school through the micro business the organization established for her. Equally important a good number of the beneficiaries admitted in the success stories, that the organization supported them with loans to start up small business that enable them to support their families. In addition, two sisters who were beneficiaries said they were hopeless and poor with no

skills but V.G.F capacitated them with skills on how to manufacture fabrics and now they have a tailoring workshop. Notably they manufactured fabrics as means to survive. Thirdly some young ladies (youths) admitted that V.G.F, sponsored them through scholarships and they were able to go as far as seating for the General Certificate of Education (GCE). Similarly two others appreciated V.G.F for incurring the cost of their fees as they were completing their training as semi finalist and finalist in the Nursing training school of Limbe Cameroon. But unfortunately the NGO could not sponsor a large number because of lack of funds

Rate for V.G.F empowerment programme.

Category of responds	Respondents (F)	Percentage%
Good	35	100%

Table 17: Rate for Voice of Grace empowerment programme?

Table 18 presents the findings from the questionnaires on the rate at which the V.G.F empowerment programmes supported women in Limbe Cameroon to alleviate poverty. The responses from the questionnaires indicated that all the respondents said the empowerment programmes among women in Limbe to reduce poverty was “GOOD”. Since all the respondents rated V.G.F programmes to reduce poverty as good. Therefore the NGOs programme towards Cameroonian women efforts in Limbe to reduce poverty is effective to an extent.

V.G.F services to empower women

Category of V.G.F Service continuation	Frequency	Percent
YES	35	100

Table 18: Continuation of Voice of Grace Foundation Service's

Table 19 indicates the findings on whether the respondents think V.G.F will continue to offer its kind services towards women empowerment in Limbe. The respondent's rate was 100%. Thus all the respondents said "YES" V.G.F will continue to offer its services to empower women. Since a reasonable number of women continued to come to the NGO to gain knowledge on how to become economic independent, it implied that women had gain consciousness on the important role they could play to reduce poverty and improve their status. As a result the respondents assert that the growing population of women coming to the organization to seek for knowledge on how to improve living conditions was a sign that V.G.F programme will continue. These findings expose the role by V.G.F to capacitate women on how to generate income and manage capital to reduce poverty.

Success of V.G.F empowerment programmes

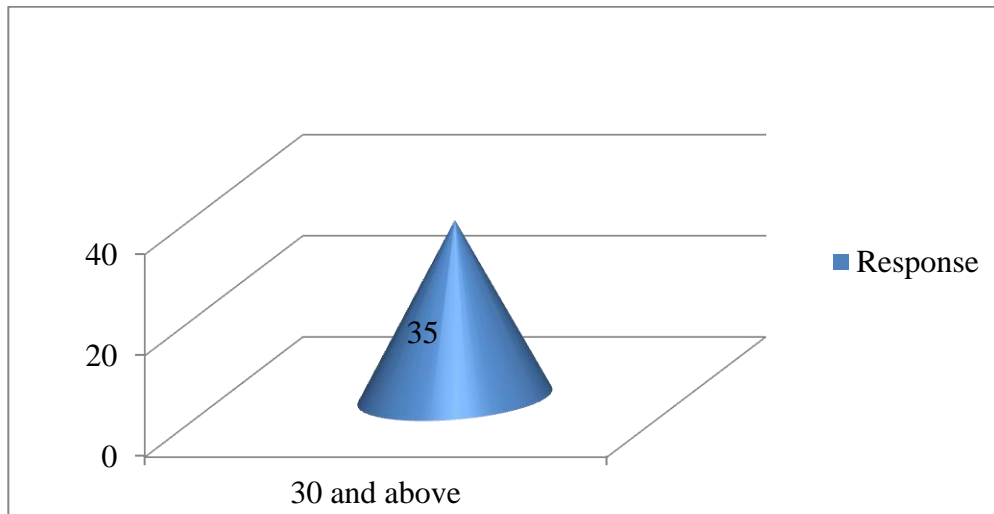


Figure 4: Number of women successful with V.G.F empowerment programmes

The figure shows that all the respondents agreed that V.G.F successfully empowers over 30 women and above. This gave the researcher a response rate of 100%. Thus all the respondents indicated that 30 women and above are benefitting from V.G.F programmes in their efforts to reduce poverty.

Benefits from V.G.F programmes

Category of benefits	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
Skills	5	14.3
Loans	9	25.7

Education	2	5.7
Jobs	19	54.3
Total	35	100%

Table 19: Benefits of V.G.F empowerment programmes on women

The table indicates how women in Limbe benefitted from V. G. F programmes. According to the respondents, 31.4 % of the respondents indicated that they were empowered with seed capital to support their micro business and projects. Meanwhile 54.3 % of the respondents confirmed that the organization empowers them through workshops on skills management. Additionally 14.3 % of the respondents indicated that they were empowered through workshops and seminars organized to create in them awareness on their rights. In addition the women said they gained knowledge in development schemes such as building women capacity on income generating activities and savings.

4.2.5 Challenges to Voice of Grace Foundation empowerment.

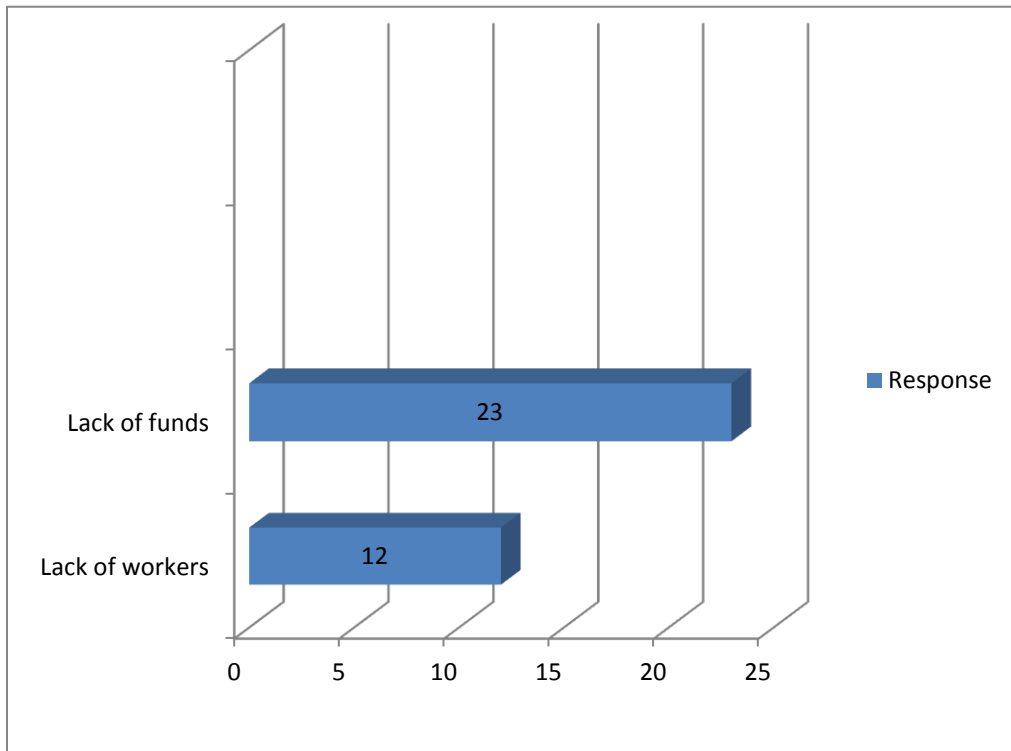


Figure 5: Challenges faced with V.G.F programmes?

The figure above indicates the challenges faced by respondents with V.G.F programmes. According to the responses 34.4 % of the respondents claimed that they faced challenges such as lack of staff with expertise to educate women on capacity building and women development. Equally they said the NGO lacked workers to coordinate programs and workshops to empower women on how to be successful with their micro financial projects. Hence most of the staff was voluntary workers. Consequently after gaining experience to train women they often left the organization with the experiences and expertise to train women. Equally since V.G.F could not afford to pay its staff, the organization lost most of its experience workers. Equally since most staff worked on

voluntary basis it was difficult to get support from volunteers to support the NGOs vision. On the other hand 65.5% of the respondents stated that the organization faced lack of financial means to support more empowerment programmes to eradicate poverty. It is for this reason that the number of poor women increased in Limbe Cameroon. Therefore it was difficult for V.G.F to support women eradicate poverty since they lacked foreign aids to meet up with the NGOs objectives and mission to support women efforts to reduce poverty in Limbe adequately.

In addition the V.G. F Annual Conference Report Journal (2011-2012) stated similar challenges as mentioned by the respondents. According to V.G.F Annual Conference Report, (2011-2012) the NGO faced challenges such as lack of institutional support. This also included financial, material and equipments such as copiers, laptops, scanners, cameras, projectors, flipchart stands, chairs and tables for the office, computers, printers, video cameras, fixed phones and internet apparatus. Equally important the organization faced difficulty breaking through the government policy to provide assistance to the needy women.

Notably the NGO also faced an increase in the number of beneficiaries who needed support for their project .This increase has raise the budget of the organization to a level that the organization has to seek support from both international and national communities to meet up with the demands of the beneficiaries. However because of

limited funds the NGO recruits volunteers rather than permanent staff. Thus salaries will increase the NGOs expenditure especially now that the beneficiaries have increased.

Challenges on the NGO

Category of challenges	Respondents(F)	Percentage (%)
Lack of funds	18	51.4
Lack of support from women	1	2.9
Lack of Government support	9	25.7
Shortage of staff	7	20.0
Total	35	100%

Table 20: what are the challenges faced by your Organization?

The Table 22 presents the respondents views on what challenges the NGO encountered with its programmes to alleviate poverty among women in Limbe Cameroon. 51.4% of the respondents indicated that the NGO lacked enough funds to meet up with the high demands of the increasing population of women who came to the organization for financial support through loans or seed capital. On the other hand 2.9 % of the respondents indicated that some women were not serious with their business or projects.

As a result they were not successful with seed capital and loans. Consequently the women could not afford to pay back loans to the organization. Equally important, 25.7 % of the respondents indicated that the government does not support V.G.F programmes to empower women in Limbe to reduce poverty. Thus the efforts of the NGO alone cannot be enough to support the efforts of women to reduce poverty in Limbe. Added to the above 20.0 % of the respondents indicated that the organization lacked experts teach women skills on income generating activities and business management. Lastly the organization lacked funds to pay the staff. As a matter of fact since most workers of the organizations were volunteers. Consequently because they were not salaried workers most of them left the organization with the experiences they had gained to train women in poverty reduction. This created a gap within the NGO as affected the NGO programmes on poverty reduction.

Therefore with challenges such as lack of funds, staff, and support, from the government, and international partners the NGO is failing to adequately attain its objective on poverty alleviation among women in Limbe Cameroon.

Other groups to be empowered by V.G.F

Category to be empowered	Respondents(F)	Percentage%
Youths	35	100%

Table 21: Other target group empowered by V.G.F

The table presents the responses from the respondents on the next group which needed to be empowered. The respondents all said the youths also needed to be empowered. Certainly they were also vulnerable to poverty. Notably the young girls in Limbe are victims of sickness and abuses from men. Hence a good number of young girls were school drop outs, who tried to earn a living out of their life expenses .Consequently they were exposed to many dangers such as unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. As a result this also brings out the hardship faced by women in Limbe from poverty. Many young girls could not afford to go to school either because their parents preferred to send them into early marriage or because they could not afford to pay their fees. Consequently they either ended up as school drop outs or into prostitution. Equally important young girls could hardly find a job to enable them sustain living because of inadequate education. Therefore most of them ended up as single mothers who could neither take care their babies nor themselves. This implies that empowerment on youths will create awareness since they represent the future. Notably they will understand the ills that patriarchal and discriminatory customary laws can cause on women. Hence a collective effort from both sexes in the society is important to foster development and eradicate poverty which is a major hindrance to development.

4.14 Conclusion.

From the data presented and analyzed above, on the impact of NGO programmes in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe. The assertion that Cameroonian women in Limbe are poor is as a result of the fact that they are deprived of basic education by patriarchal laws in the country. Hence besides the lack of basic education to compete with men over jobs in the formal sector, women participation is not recognized as they are considered vulnerable and poor. The findings from the study have been used to show the hardship that women in Limbe undergo as a result of poverty. The findings indicated the activities of women in the informal sector with the efforts of NGO such as V. G. F, to reduce poverty among women in Limbe .The findings from the research study indicated that although V.G.F programmes supported women efforts to alleviate poverty in Limbe Cameroon, there was still a gap on women empowerment. For this reason women need to be capacitated with education for them to reduce poverty from a formal sector and not in the informal sector as demonstrated in the research findings. Hence despite the many efforts of NGOs to capacitate women in Cameroon there is still a gap on women empowerment. Therefore in order to improve women efforts to reduce poverty there is need for a collective effort from men, women, government and nongovernmental organizations, to put in place adequate programmes and policies to end patriarchal laws, customary and legal laws that hindered women access to productive resources in Limbe Cameroon.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the entire process of data collection and presentation with key findings before it makes recommendations. The summary of the research process takes into account the literature review and the data collection process. The recommendations in this section of the research are for the government officials, policy makers at all levels be it social, economic and academic or institutional and Nongovernmental organizations. The chapter ends with a conclusion that closes the research as a whole.

5.1 Summary of research process

The research sought to analyze the impact of NGO programmes in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women in Limbe Cameroon. The researcher used some literatures, on women empowerment including: articles books reports and newspapers aimed at setting a basis for the inquiry. To establish a foundation of the study, the researcher used a case study of women at the V.G.F, to analyze the impact of V.G.F among Cameroonian women alleviating poverty.

Fundamental to the researcher is an understanding of the status of women in Cameroon which is equally important. A typical definition and measurement of women's poverty in the literature is based on the conventional measures of a qualitative measure of "entitlement" and "capabilities". These social indicators, along with the more

conventional definitions and measures of household income and consumption, capture what the UNDP terms “human development” or “human poverty”. Human development is defined as the process of enlarging people’s choice and opportunities through long life, health, and education. (Littlefield, Schuler and Carol, 2002).

However, human poverty is defined as “more than income poverty” (In other words it is the denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life (UNDP, 1997:2). The latter are captured by social indicators such as literacy, primary and secondary school enrolment, access to health, access to land or employment, wages differentials.

According to the researcher although many NGOs in Cameroon, both international and national have made meaningful efforts to empower women, however there is still much to be done to empower women in Cameroon. This could be seen from the number of challenges that arise during the research study. For this reasons women empowerment which is important for their effective participation in development cannot be easily attained by NGOs alone. Similarly (Endeley, 1998) holds that Cameroonian NGOs, working on women issues focus more on the provision of women’s practical gender needs than on their strategic gender needs. The government, other international and national bodies therefore need to support the efforts of NGOs in their objectives to capacitate and integrate women in Cameroon to help them reduce poverty.

Consequently this explains why women in Limbe Cameroon continue to suffer from poverty and discriminations. This is indicated by the growing number of women who come to the Voice of Grace Foundation for support and empowerment to improve their living conditions (Voice of Grace Foundation Annual Conference Report Journal (2011-2012)).

A number of challenges were faced during the research and this includes the lack of the means of transportation for the researcher to meet with respondents face to face in Cameroon. This made it impossible for the researcher to carry out an interview with the respondents. As a result the researcher had to apply a desk study and questionnaire guide, with a research assistant to distribute the questionnaires to facilitate data collection. Additionally, time was equally a major constrain faced by the researcher, while collecting questionnaires from the respondents. This reduced the total targeted sample size from 50 to 35 respondents. The reason was that, there was not enough time for the researcher to get the participation of the entire targeted group in the sample population.

5.2 Summary of key findings

The opinion from the participants in this study indicates that all the participants understood the role and impact of NGO programmes to alleviate poverty among Cameroonian women. Considering these understanding, it set the tone for the kind

participation in the responses that were received. The total number of 35 responses was returned to the researcher for analysis, from which the findings of the research is based.

In addition, the questions “what work do you do and how many hours per day do you work per week? Is the money you earn adequate for your living expenses” was one of the most popular questions responded to by the participants. The responses from the participants paved way for further responses to the preceding questions. On the basis of rational of the impact V.G.F among Cameroonian women alleviating poverty in Limbe, the participant had a common reaction given to the researcher. In the category of the sample size the two major groups of respondents gave similar responses from the different category of questions. The personal information such as professional qualification enable the researcher to bring out the different category of the respondents professional qualifications and literacy level. From the category of responses in the findings, on gender the women make up 21.60% while staff represent 14.40%, this according to the researcher is symbolic of the women majority in Cameroon. Yet their participation is not recognized. Consequently the results from the findings indicated the gap that exists among women in Limbe that hinders their efforts to reduce poverty. Hence the number of hours they work per day a week and the income they generated i) is not enough to take care of their needs, ii) to send their children to school, iii) improve their health conditions and support their micro projects. This goes further to explain why the findings on the respondent’s satisfaction with their income, most of them said their

living condition was poor and they were not satisfied with their income. Hence the women's income was not adequate to sustain their living expenses.

Notably most of them are Farmers, Hair dressers, Tailors just to name a few. This implies that the women lack education and skills to work in the formal sector. Equally some of the women lacked any source of income as indicated in the findings from the Annual Conference report of Voice of Grace Foundation for 2011-2012. Equally important, a beneficiary from V.G.F indicated that she and her daughter use to live in the streets because she had no job and no means of accommodation.

Furthermore the question on the hardship faced by the women paves way for the answer to the question on the impact of NGO programmes among Cameroonian women alleviating poverty in Limbe. The results of the findings on the impact of NGO programmes indicated that V.G.F did its best to support the efforts among women to reduce poverty in Limbe. Thus the participants in the sample all rated the Voice of Grace Foundation empowerment as "GOOD", and they all responded with "YES" to the questions on whether women benefited from the NGOs empowerment programmes to reduce poverty.

Most of the participants revealed that they benefited in one way or the other. According to findings from the research study, it is evident that the participants all said their lives

standard improved with the V.G.F programmes through: i) Workshops on health conditions, ii) Through education on awareness of women rights, iii) From vocational trainings for capacity building on skills management, and income generating activities, iv) Finally on seed capital and loans to enable women become self-employed.

However despite all efforts by V.G.F, to empower women in Limbe, there were some challenges which hindered the NGOs efforts to capacitate women. This included i) the growing number of women who came for empowerment. ii) The lack of support from government and international agencies ii) The NGO lacked funds to support the empowerment programs to reduce poverty iv) Lastly the organization lacked experts who could train women thus most workers were voluntary.

5.3 Conclusion

According to Prasad (2007) the national policy for empowerment of women, since 2001 sees women as peers in the development efforts. The policy therefore holds that “there is need for a policy to bring about the advancement of women”. In any case the policy encourages the government policies through actions and plans appropriate enough to institute mechanisms partnered by voluntary organizations. Therefore if women are educated they will participate to reduce poverty according to the Millennium Development Goals and Structural Adjustment Plans in Cameroon. Hence a collective effort from men, women, NGOs, Local institutions and the Government will promote

poverty reduction schemes and yield better results towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals to sustainably eradicate poverty. However the researcher posits that interventions by NGOs such as the V.G.F do not contribute to reduce poverty among Cameroonian women adequately. Hence women in Limbe Cameroon are empowered by V.G.F programmes to reduce poverty more from the informal sector which satisfies only the practical gender needs of women. Consequently the fact that the research findings indicated that the women in Limbe Cameroon are still uneducated and not satisfied with their health conditions and daily income. It implies that there is still a gap on the efforts of NGOs to support women in Limbe alleviate poverty adequately. (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) 1999, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Economic and Management University of Yaounde11

5.4 Recommendations

- On the poverty and hardship faced by women in Limbe, the researcher observed that very little has been done by the government at the national level to provide women with education. Secondly policy makers have not resolved the resolutions of the (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995) to put an end to legal obstacles and cultural constraints on women access to control productive resources. This explains why according to the research findings Cameroonian women in Limbe are still uneducated and poor. For this reason there is an emergent need for

gender inclusion by eliminating illiteracy among poor women in Limbe. Thus where women activities are given some form of recognition, they often do not have the opportunity to excel. At the family level, women are rarely consulted on many basic decisions which directly affect their productive and reproductive lives.

- According to the research findings, the Voice of Grace Foundation efforts to support women in Limbe alleviate poverty have indicated that women in Limbe are not adequately empowered to reduce poverty from the formal sector. The V.G.F programmes have supported Cameroonian women in Limbe, to meet up with only practical gender needs. As a result the women have gained the capacity to support their families from the informal sector jobs. However the women still lack the capacity to acquire strategic gender needs to adequately reduce poverty. This is evident from the research findings on professional qualification. The majority of women receiving empowerment from the V.G.F lacked adequate education to reduce poverty from the formal sector. The researcher therefore recommends that women should be involved in little economic opportunity such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

According to (Wihad, 1999) it is a credit institution that started in 1983. The Bank gives small loans to the rural poor on a group liability basis instead of requiring any collateral. These loans and its interest are repayable in small weekly instalments over a period of one year. Equally (Wihad, 1999) states that besides the little economic opportunities Grammen Bank provide comprehensive investment advice to its clients and helps them

to generate savings for themselves. In addition (Wihad, 1999) remarks that Grameen Bank and its credit programs has successfully changed the life- style of many poor women in Bangladesh. Besides loans the Bank has improved the life of its potential members through by exposure to modern world. The potential members for Grameen Bank includes rural women in Bangladesh who do not possess more than half an acre of land or assets more than the value of one acre of medium- quality land. Notably these women are illiterates and they lack experiences in handling large or medium investments. However, the Bank has improved transports systems and education is widely spreading across villages. Women education has been particularly promoted. Girl's education up to grade ten is being offered free of charge by the government from 1991 to 1996. This has produced an important impact on the increase in female student's enrolment in both primary and secondary levels (Wihad, 1999). The researcher recommends that the government and nongovernmental institutions in Cameroon should implement programs such as the Grameen Bank. Such credit initiatives will support women reduce poverty and improves their life style. Therefore to improve the impact of Voice of Grace Foundation to alleviate poverty among women, NGO, should not provide women with mainly employment in the informal sector. Hence this is evident in the research findings.

- According to the research findings it is evident that the Voice of Grace Foundation programmes empowers women to alleviate poverty to satisfy their

immediate needs such as: food, water, and health. Rather women should be empowered on how to manage discriminations against subordination. For this reason, women still face challenges attaining to their strategic gender needs. The researcher recommends that the Voice of Grace Foundation should go beyond their objectives of development thus women need help on the provision of their strategic gender needs to change the cultural and institutional policy that are interpreted as foreign intervention on domestic issues from international NGOs. Therefore if patriarchal dominations are suppressed women education will be promoted in order to improve the status of women in Limbe.

- The research findings indicate that women in Limbe are still poor despite the fact that they are being empowered by Voice of Grace Foundation to alleviate poverty. This is evident from the research findings thus women were not satisfied with their long working hours per day. In order to put an end to poverty among women the researcher recommends that women should be promoted as equal partners in the society. Hence it will enable the traditional authorities and patriarchal society to see the need to abolish many taboos and practices that are not development-friendly. As a result of gender balances in management committees, traditional councils and the sacred societies will be achieved over time. This calls for capacity building trainings on gender balances in

management for traditional rulers and local authorities for a long term change on the status of women in Limbe Cameroon.

- The researcher recommends that the Voice of Grace Foundation should support women in Limbe to reduce poverty effectively, by providing adequate education and awareness that will help bring out their abilities. The researcher therefore agrees with (Swain, 2006) hence empowering women via micro finance is not an adequate source of empowerment for women. Rather NGOs support in specialized training will have a greater ability to make a positive impact on women. Therefore if women empowerment is to be pursued to support women to alleviate poverty in Limbe then much emphasis has to be placed on training, education and creating awareness in order to achieve a larger and more lasting empowerment. In addition in order to support women alleviate poverty; there is need for capacity building among rural women. Hence just as women are neglected in the ownership and management of natural resources, they are also deprived of acquiring relevant managerial skills and techniques. Capacity-building requires a policy framework that consciously encourages the recruitment and training of women in vocational training institutions. This will equally empower women in Limbe to sustainably alleviate poverty.

- On the result of the research findings it was evident that the Voice of Grace Foundation did not to empower Cameroonian women in Limbe to reduce poverty adequately. This was due to challenges such as lacked of government support. The researcher recommends that the local and government institutions should support the efforts of Voice of Grace Foundation to empower Cameroonian women to reduce poverty in Limbe. Notably partnerships with the state and other development and traditional institutions will challenge existing discriminatory laws and policies at all levels in Limbe Cameroon. Hence such interventions will compliment the work already done by NGOs at the level of practical gender needs. Therefore as a fundamental changes towards women empowerment in Cameroon, men must equally change their male attitudes while the government and other development agents must also contribute to improving the women practical and strategic gender needs.
- The researcher recommends that NGOs need to improve on the level of training they give women as a source of employment. The NGO in Cameroon as demonstrated with the Voice of Grace Foundation attempts to satisfy the practical gender needs of women with access to employment. However despite this efforts woman are still concentrated on the lower echelons of the society as secretaries as well as in the informal sector in small business. This is evidenced on the category of work done by women in Limbe. However the trainings offered

to women by the Voice of Grace Foundation such as training in adult literacy, home economics, sanitation and hygienic awareness, do not lift women up to high political managerial or military positions and public responsibility, rather women continue to be concentrated in the informal sector and they only become better wives. Therefore similar to (Moser, 1993) the researcher will recommend that women trainings should include areas reserved for men.

- In order to put an end to patriarchal laws and discriminatory legal and cultural laws, in Limbe Cameroon, the researcher recommends that the Cameroon government should carry out immediate actions to resolve gender gaps. Thus Cameroon's 1999 Human Resource Development report cited that "gender gaps" between female and male achievements in the areas of education, economic activity and political participation should be amended. Hence poverty among women in Cameroon is as a result of their lack of leadership, participation in decision making and control over assets. This is due to low literacy, lacks of skills, lack of self-esteem, financial security and level of awareness of their rights. For this reason (CEDAW, 1999) emphasized that the government should put an end to patriarchal dominations to reduce economic dependency on men which is reinforced by discriminatory laws and policies in public institutions for a long term inclusion of women in Limbe.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Clearance Letter



Investing in Africa's Future

P.O. BOX 1320, MUTARE, ZIMBABWE - OFF NYANGA ROAD, OLD MUTARE - TEL: (263-20) 66788/60075/60026/61611 - FAX: (263-20) 66788/61785 - EMAIL: ipgdirector@africau.ac.zw - Website www.africau.edu

INSTITUTE OF PEACE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

21 April 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Permission to Undertake Research for Dissertation at Africa University

Esther Ntuli Ojong is a student at Africa University. She is enrolled in a degree program in Peace and Governance and is currently conducting research for her project, which is required for completion of the program in June 2015. The research topic is **"The Impacts of NGOs Programmes in Alleviating Poverty Among Comeroonian Women: A Case Study of the Voice of Grace Foundation Cameroon in Limbe)".** Esther is expected to undertake this research during the period April-May 2015 before the dissertation can be submitted to the Faculty in June 2015.

The student will share with you the results of this research after its approval by the Institute.

We thank you for your support and cooperation regarding this research.

Yours sincerely


Prof. P. Machakanja
Director



Appendix B: Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Ntui Esther Ojong, a student doing Peace Leadership and Governance in the Institute of Peace Leadership and Governance. Your kind assistance in filling out the questionnaires below will enable me to fulfill one of my academic requirements for my dissertation I am undertaking a research on the topic: *An Investigation into the Impact of Voice of Grace Foundation Programmes in Alleviating Poverty Among Cameroonian Women in Limbe Cameroon.*

Your answers to the questionnaire will be strictly confidential. No one will be identified by name or shown the filled questionnaire. The information's on the filled questionnaire will be used strictly for academic purpose.

Thanks in advance for completing and returning this questionnaire.

The questionnaires should be completed and sent to

Ntui Esther Ojong

Africa University

Mutare, Zimbabwe

P.O Box 1320

Or (for those filling online)

E-mail as an attach file to: estherjones2003@yahoo.com

SECTION A:

General information about the respondent: Please tick the appropriate alternatives

Confidentiality will be greatly respected.

1. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age 18-34 ☐ 35-40 ☐ 45-50 ☐

Position.....

3. Years of experience?

A year ☐ 1-2 years ☐

3-5 years ☐ 5 years++ ☐

4. What is your level of academic qualification or Professional qualification?

O' Level A 'Level
Diploma Degree Others

SECTION B: ROLE PLAYED BY THE V.G.F STAFF TO SUPPORT WOMEN
EFFORT TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN LIMBE CAMEROON.

*NGO programs are used to fill the gap the government is unable to meet up with, in the
process of capacitating women with skills and potentials to combat poverty.*

5. How many women is the Voice of Grace Foundation empowering in a year?

10-20 20-40 40-80 80 and above

6. How many women in Limbe are successful with the empowerment from Voice of
Grace Foundation and how beneficial is the empowerment on them?

5-10 10-20 20-30 30 and above

7. For how long has the Voice of Grace Foundation been empowering women in
Cameroon?

5-10 years 10-20 years 20-30 years above 30 years

8. What are the challenges being faced by your Organization?

Lack of funds Lack of support from the women
Lack of Government support shortage of staff

9. Has the empowerment programme had any impact on living Standards of the Cameroonian Women?

Yes No Partially

10. How do you rate the Voice of Grace Foundation Empowerment programme?

Very Good Good
Fair Poor

11. Does the V.G.F programme help the Women to improve on the economic situation in Cameroon?

.....

If Yes How/ If No Why?

.....

12. Do you think the Voice of Grace Foundation will continue to offer the kind of services they are giving towards women empowerment?

.....

13. Are there other target groups which the Voice of Grace Foundation should support?

.....

SECTION C

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE WOMEN BEING EMPOWERED AT V.G.F


Complete Questionnaires by ticking with X on the appropriate space provided


Confidentiality will be greatly respected

1. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age 15-34 ☐ 35-40 ☐ 45-50 ☐ 55-55 ☐

3. Marital status Married ☐ Single ☐

4. Educational level 

5. Number of children 

6. What work do you do and how many hours per day do you work per week?

.....
.....

7. Is the money you earn adequate for your living expenses?

.....

8. What is your health condition? Are you satisfied with it or not? How do you work to improve your health condition?

.....

8. Do you know what an NGO is?

.....

9. Do you know the Voice of Grace Foundation?

Yes or No

.....

How important is it to you?

.....

10. What benefits do you receive from the V.G.F?

.....

11. What challenges did you face with the V.G.F programmes?

.....

Appendix C: Consent Letter



The Executive Director,
Voice of Grace Foundation,
Limbe, south -west Cameroon.

Consent Letter

My name is NTUI ESTHER OJONG. I am a student in the Institute of Peace Leadership and Governance, Masters of Peace Leadership and Governance at Africa University Zimbabwe Mutare. As part of requirement to complete this course I am required to conduct a research and submit a dissertation. I am therefore conducting a research on the topic: THE IMPACT OF NGO PROGRAMMES IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG CAMEROONIAN WOMEN: CASE STUDY OF VOICE OF GRACE FOUNDATION IN LIMBE SOUTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

I kindly wish to seek for your permission to carry out this research study. I wish to request for your participation to fill in the questionnaires. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of the programmes implemented by the Voice of Grace Foundation in Limbe south- west region of Cameroon, to support the efforts of women in Limbe to alleviate poverty and improve the living standards in Cameroon. Equally the study will create awareness on the gender gap that exist between men and women in Cameroon, because of the patriarchal practices that deprives women of the rights to go to school .You were selected because you are part of the Voice of Grace Foundation and member of the community whose potential contribution in national development to eradicate poverty is very meaningful. As a member of the organization you understand the programmes of the organization better. This research study will give the women in Limbe a clear understanding on how they are suppose to use the skills they learn from NGO programmes to bring out their capacity and potentials to contribute positively to improve live standards and the economic status of women in Cameroon.

The research will be very confidential and will be used strictly for academic purpose. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the process anytime you feel uncomfortable .If you have read, understood and have decided to participate in the research study please sign below as an indication of your agreement.

Appendix D: Acceptance Letter



VOICE OF GRACE FOUNDATION (V.G.F)



Head Quarters Address:

P.O.Box 929 Limbe, Fako Division, South West Region
Cameroon ,

Website: www.voiceofgracefoundation.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/VoiceofGraceFoundation

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/VGFVoice>

Email: vgf25vgf@yahoo.com

Registration N°:1076/G.37/D.14/1766/VOLT/T BAAP

Infolines:

Tel: +237696643063

Mobile: +237675552627

Telefax: +23723333360

Liaison/Coordinating Unit Offices:

Focal Point Yaounde: (+237)678534355 / 677632491

Focal Point Bamenda: (+237)677488422 / 696698791

Motto: 'Service to Humanity for His Glory'

Our Ref: VGF 025/BD/ED/RS01/02/28/2015

Friday, 27th February 2015.

Your Ref: _____

**To: Ms. Ntui Esther Ojong
Masters of Peace Leadership and Governance,
Africa University- Zimbabwe, Mutare.**

Dear Esther,

Letter of Acceptance.

I am Dr. Ndonwi Wilfred, the founding president and Executive Director of the above- mentioned organization. After reading through your letter of consent to carry out a research on the topic " THE IMPACTS OF NGOS PROGRAMMES IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG CAMEROONIAN WOMEN: CASE STUDY OF THE VOICE OF GRACE FOUNDATION CAMEROON IN LIMBE" South West Region.

I therefore, express interest to accept your Data Collection Administrator- Mr. Amibang Awah Martin to carry out this research in our organisation - Voice of Grace Foundation; to enable you complete your study at the Institute of Peace Leadership and Governance.

Thus, it is my fervent wish that our inputs and contributions to this very exciting study will be a milestone to achieving your academic goal.

Good luck with your research studies.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Ndonwi Wilfred
PhD. BA / NSM/PFIN
Executive Director / Council Chair



27 FEB 2015

Appendix E: AUREC Letter



INVESTING IN AFRICA'S FUTURE

AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUREC)

P.O. BOX 1320, MUTARE, ZIMBABWE • OFF NYANGA ROAD, OLD MUTARE • TEL: (+263-20) 60075/60026/61611 • E-MAIL: aurec@africau.edu • WEBSITE: www.africau.edu

Ref: AU222/15

March 31, 2015

Ester Ntui
Institute of Peace Leadership and Governance
Africa University
Mutare

Re: The impact of NGO programmes in alleviating poverty among Cameroonian women: Case of Voice of Grace Foundation in Limbe South West Region of Cameroon

Thank you for the above titled proposal that you submitted to the Africa University Research Ethics Committee for review. Please be advised that AUREC has reviewed and **approved** your application to conduct the above research.

The approval is based on the following.

- a) Research proposal
- b) Questionnaires
- c) Informed consent form

- **APPROVAL NUMBER** AU222/15

This number should be used on all correspondences, consent forms, and appropriate documents.

- **APPROVAL DATE** 31 March, 2015
- **EXPIRATION DATE** 30 March, 2016
- **TYPE OF MEETING** Expedited

After the expiration date this research may only continue upon renewal. For purposes of renewal, a progress report on a standard AUREC form should be submitted a month before expiration date.

- **SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS** All serious problems having to do with subject safety must be reported to AUREC within 3 working days on standard AUREC form.
- **MODIFICATIONS** Prior AUREC approval is required before implementing any changes in the proposal (including changes in the consent documents)
- **TERMINATION OF STUDY** Upon termination of the study a report has to be submitted to AUREC using standard form obtained from.

Yours Faithfully

**MITI G. P. AUREC Programmes Officer-
FOR CHAIRPERSON,
AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

