National Action Plan to support women’s participation in decision-making in Cameroon

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

2018, Revised Edition
BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Cameroon’s political agenda envisaged Senatorial and Presidential elections in 2018 and the municipal, legislative and possibly regional elections in 2019.

In a bid to improve women’s representation in positions of decision-making during the different elections, the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family, with the technical and financial support from UN-Women organized “Gender coffee” sessions in the ten (10) regions of the country under the central theme: “Reinforcement of women’s participation and representation in public life and decision-making”.

Gender café is a concept developed by MINPROFF and UN-Women in 2014, to serve as a platform for dialogue and exchanges towards boosting women’s participation in political life. Organised for the first time in Yaoundé and in response to several requests, Gender café has now been extended to the other Regions, but for the North-West and South-West Regions, owing to the socio-political insecurity prevailing there.

In the wake of these forums, a road map was adopted, setting up a task force charged with formulating a National Strategic Plan. Given that the said plan must identify the specific needs of each Region, nine (9) regional strategies were developed and regional task-forces comprising 10 (ten) persons put in place, to ensure their implementation. However, it must be pointed out that the West Regional Strategic Plan incorporates the needs and worries of the North-West Region.

The underlying objective of these ventures is guided by the theme, “Developing a ‘Gender-Elections’ National Strategic Plan”, designed to be implemented during the upcoming elections.
The ‘bottom-top approach’ adopted for developing the above mentioned strategies requires that ideas, or even needs be gathered from grassroots in a participatory forum.

During the regional gender cafés, obstacles to the full participation of women in political life were identified and this led to the formulation of some recommendations.
I. DEVELOPING THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENDER CAFES

I- context of the formulation of the national action plan to support women’s participation in decision-making

The present Strategy is an outcome of brainstorming during Gender Cafés organised at the headquarters of the 10 (ten) Regions of Cameroon, supplemented by the delivery of the Strategic Development Workshop to Implement Gender Café Recommendations, held on 21 and 22 December 2017 by the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family, in partnership with the UN body for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN-Women). The said workshop which was an extended task brought together, women and men including:

- Members of Parliament;
- Locally elected representatives;
- Representatives of the UN System;
- Representatives of ELECAM;
- Officials of civil society organisations as well as council and regional authorities;
- Representatives of political parties;
- Representatives of the media;
- Personnel from the central and devolved services of MINPROFF.

A. WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

First and foremost, the Strategic plan is based on the fact that, despite the commendable strides made by the Cameroon Government to empower the Cameroonian woman politically, political life is still dominated by men. Moreover, absence of such a document would continue to defeat all efforts deployed, here and there, towards raising the participation of women in political life.

In addition, this Strategic Plan is intended to give our country a reference tool that can serve in concerted actions in the face of the numerous existing action plans and strategies that hinder attempts to increase women’s representation in the political landscape and in resolving problems raised. In this way, this strategic
plan is likened to a compass designed to ease decision-making and equally constitutes a guide to boosting the participation of women in political life, taking into consideration the specificities of each Region. It ultimately constitutes an advocacy document as well as a fund-raising tool. From a general perspective, the Strategy obtains a set of guidelines, intended to inspire and jump-start national action. It takes into account the diverse cultural, religious, political and institutional contexts and seeks to offer appropriate solutions.

In this light, it is a tool intended to promote national integration, culture of peace and a harmonious living together.

**DIAGNOSIS (what is the current situation?)**

With regard to the current level of women’s participation in the political life of our country, analysis of available information on the diverse regional realities reveals that, a number of elements still hamper the active participation of women in the politics of Cameroon. These include:

- Absence of a political culture and lack of information;
- Indifference of women to political matters;
- Lack of the NIC due to its high cost, the increasingly intricate formalities for obtaining it and socio-cultural barriers in certain regions;
- Lack of confidence and self-esteem in women;
- Lack of support and guidance attributable to the lack of confidence that men exercise towards women in certain Regions;
- Barriers erected by certain community leaders against women, multiple forms of discrimination and the masochist habits of men;
- The low-educational level and illiteracy of young girls as compared to young boys;
- The individualism of men and women;
The irresponsible behaviour of some men in households, that overburdens women with domestic chores;

The rejection of women with disabilities;

The abject poverty of women;

The low cost of farm produce that leads to the precariousness of rural women.

Besides government actions, the issue is increasingly reaping the fruits of the advocacy work of the civil society, accomplished essentially by female organisations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and human rights associations, which insist on the importance of encouraging the participation of women in political life.

B. What are the characteristics of this strategic plan?

For this strategic plan to be meaningful, it must:

- Be harmonised, realistic, practical, inclusive and take into account the specificities of Regions;
- Be multi-sectorial;
- Be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound);
- Be in compliance with the law and clearly outline major guidelines of the national women empowerment policy;
- Be consensual and national (government, parliament, Local Councils, CSO) and represent a road map that enables the mobilisation of all stakeholders involved in the political participation and advancement of women;
- Be developed in a progressive manner, taking into account the existing challenges and available resources.
II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

A. Overall objective
- To increase the participation of women in political and public life, and attain the 50/50 parity goal by 2030.

B. Specific objectives:
- Increase the number of women at elective positions;
- Increase the number of female electors (women and girls);
- Encourage women and girls to engage in political life;
- Raise the enrolment rate of women of voting age by 20% on voter registers in 2018;
- Prepare for upcoming elections;
- Advocate for the inclusion of financial penalties in the law against discriminatory practices in electoral matters;
- Advocate for the inclusion of gender parity in the electoral law.

C. Contains of the strategic plan
- All what obstructs political participation upfront, notably conditions for an active participation of women in political life, by tackling the matter of socio-cultural, educational, employment, health barriers and myths as well as participation in economic life;
- Consolidation of the legal foundation of gender equality;
- Political participation per se at national level through 'awareness drives or "political conscience-awakening" of women, respect of the principle of equality within political parties, implementing measures considered as positive action, participation of women in general elections and discharge of political responsibilities by both men and women;
- The mechanism for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the recommendations contained in the Strategic plan.
III. MAIN RECOMMANDATIONS:

- Advocacy for enforcement of the electoral law that guarantees more than 30% of women (quotas) in elective positions;
- Lobbying authorities and elites to facilitate issuing of the Birth Certificate and the National Identity Card to adults;
- Organisation of educational talks for an increased and equal participation in political life;
- Political education and training of women at grassroots level;
- Dissemination of legal instruments on election;
- Regular organisation of gender cafés and decentralisation of forthcoming editions to all divisions;
- Developing subvention mechanisms or schemes for female candidates in elections;
- Translation and broadcast in local languages of national and international legal tools;
- Lobbying for the protection of women’s political interests.

IV. SCOPE OF ACTION

The present Strategic Plan, here presented, which is a result of a widespread consultation process, provides concrete solutions to situations common to the country as a whole, while offering alternatives to address the specific situations in various regions. It obtains as a harmonised national document acceptable to the entire country.

In the present Strategic Plan, emphasis is laid mainly on female political participation. However, other indicators pertaining to the exercise of civil, economic, social and cultural rights must be equally taken into account.
NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/NO</th>
<th>PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>ACTIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>PARTNERS</th>
<th>OFFICIALS IN CHARGE</th>
<th>COST (CFAF)</th>
<th>Execution deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lack of political training/coaching</td>
<td>Capacity building workshops for women</td>
<td>Mobilization and mass communication</td>
<td>Information Education Communication - Popularization of existing texts and laws - Organization of seminars, campaigns, radio/TV and community programs in official and local languages, information sessions in Associations (churches, families, njangi groups) and through ICTs</td>
<td>Women are trained and participate in the electoral process</td>
<td>Percentage of women who master the political rules</td>
<td>- State - Local Councils - Women NGOs - CSO</td>
<td>MINPROFF UN Women</td>
<td>150.000.000</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>-Violence against women who engage in politics</td>
<td>-Arm the women who are faced with political adversity</td>
<td>Capa city building coaching develop their leadership mentorship judicial support -sensitization of partners of women who engage in politics organization of 3600 educative talks -Creating a watchdog and supervisory unit coordinated by the task force -Put in place mechanisms that favor their integration -Propose a quota for persons living with disabilities</td>
<td>-Drop in the level of violence -Discriminatory practices against women are reduced - Solutions found to problems of discrimination or violence -Effective presence of persons living with disabilities in decision making spheres</td>
<td>-Number of women engaged in spite of the violence -Number of complaints from women victims of violence reduced -Number of persons living with disabilities present in decision making spheres</td>
<td>-The State -MINPROFF -Task force -Partners -Local Councils -NGOs -CSOs -Women’s Associations and Women’s Networks</td>
<td>MINPROFF</td>
<td>UN WOMEN</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>MINPROFF</td>
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|   | **3.** Poor solidarity amongst women | Organization of educational talks | - Incite active solidarity amongst women  
  - Sensitization and training | - Mentoring  
  - Sponsoring  
  - Coaching  
  - Networking  
  - Platforms  
  - Forums  
  - Conscientise women by holding 3600 educative talks, publicity spots, praise singers, a communal task force in charge of sensitizing the women. | - Level of active solidarity  
  - Women are more engaged and united in political issues | - Number of platforms for active solidarity  
  - Number of task force created  
  - Number of women conscientised | - The State  
  - MINPROFF  
  - Local Councils  
  - Women  
  - NGOs  
  - CSOs | MINPROFF UN WOMEN | To be determined. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | **4.** Socio-cultural myths | Advocacy with traditional and religious authorities  
  - Sensitization  
  - Motivative measures in favor of families and traditional authorities, for the liberation of educative talks | - Number of myths and barriers eliminated  
  - Number of girls who have gone to school | - Traditional authorities  
  - Leaders of associations  
  - Opinion leaders | - The State  
  - UN Women  
  - NGOs  
  - Associations  
  - CSOs | To be determined |
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Implementing Agency</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poor education on citizenship</td>
<td>Organization of educational talks on the importance of civil status papers/documents, Advocacy with authorities and elites to ease the issuance of birth certificates and NIC (National Identity Cards)</td>
<td>Number of cards issued, distributed and withdrawn</td>
<td>MINPROFF MINAT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of NIC and birth certificates</td>
<td>Mobile caravans to distribute NIC, -Advocacy -involvement of administrative authorities -proximity campaigns</td>
<td>-% of women whose ID cards have been issued -% of women who have withdrawn their ID cards -% of cards distributed</td>
<td>MINPROFF MINJUSTICE</td>
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<td>CSOs -NGOs -associations Religious officials</td>
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<td>The number of persons sensitized</td>
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<td>MINPROFF MINJUSTICE</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>-Seizure of the NIC by the spouse or parent</td>
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<td>Capacity building for families that are socialization units</td>
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<td>Educational talks on the importance of civil status papers</td>
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<td>Creation of a discussion platforms for women with disabilities and non-disabled women</td>
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<td>Sensitization -birth declarations -possession of NICs -enrollment on voters’ registers -participation in elections(voting)</td>
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<td>Organization of 720 consultations at the base extended to local authorities</td>
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<td>participation in elections</td>
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<td>Number of papers/documents issued</td>
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<td>MINJUSTICE -GDNS -ELECAM -MINSANTE Local Councils - Development partners -CSOs -traditional and religious authorities</td>
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<td>To be determined</td>
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<td>female politicians</td>
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