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The right to development through peace building within the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon: Between national and externally driven reconstruction processes

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Abstract: *The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development (DRtD) generally seeks to promote a rights-based approach to pursuing equity, equality and justice as core determinants of development. In 2020, Cameroon's government launched the Special Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development of the North West and South West Regions (PPRD-NW/SW) to address the so-called Anglophone conflict. Structured around recovery, resilience and reconstruction, the first phase of the implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW focused on the first two pillars from 2020 to 2025 and transitioned to its reconstruction phase starting in 2026. This chapter seeks to critically assess the right to development through peace building within the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon in relation to national and externally driven reconstruction processes. The chapter adopts the triple-nexus (humanitarian, development and peace) framework proposed by the UN and AU. The chapter is equally based on a case study and analytical approach to rely on both primary and secondary data. Government-owned and implemented by the UNDP, the 10-year project has successfully mobilised over 600 billion XAF of its 2 500 billion XAF budget. Pro-government actors argue that the PPRD-NW/SW offers an enabling environment for gradual and subsequent lasting peace. However, critics and peace-building actors argue that reconstruction amidst an active conflict without a formal process cannot lead to sustainable peace. Despite divergent internal and external polemics regarding the PPRD-NW/SW, the government is proceeding with phase II amidst ongoing 'pockets of persistent violence'. The chapter concludes that the population of the Anglophone regions of Cameroon still possesses their inalienable rights to development amid the ten years of socio-political and economic conflict.*

Résumé : *La Déclaration de 1986 sur le droit au développement (DDAD) vise globalement à promouvoir une approche fondée sur les droits pour parvenir à l'équité, à l'égalité et à la justice, considérées comme des déterminants essentiels du développement. En 2020, le gouvernement camerounais a lancé le Plan présidentiel spécial pour la reconstruction et le développement des régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest (PPRD-NW/SW) afin de répondre au conflit dit « anglophone ». Articulée autour des axes « relance », « résilience » et « reconstruction », la première phase de mise en œuvre du PPRD-NW/SW s'est concentrée sur les deux premiers piliers de*

2020 à 2025, avant de passer à la phase de reconstruction à partir de 2026. Cet article vise à évaluer de manière critique le droit au développement à travers la consolidation de la paix dans le contexte du conflit anglophone au Cameroun, en relation avec les processus de reconstruction nationaux et ceux impulsés par des acteurs extérieurs. Cet article adopte le cadre du « triple nexus » (humanitaire, développement et paix) proposé par l'ONU et l'UA. Il s'appuie également sur une étude de cas et une approche analytique combinant des données primaires et secondaires. Sous l'égide du gouvernement et mis en œuvre par le PNUD, ce projet décennal a réussi à mobiliser plus de 600 milliards de XAF sur son budget total de 2 500 milliards de XAF. Les acteurs pro-gouvernementaux affirment que le PPRD-NW/SW offre un environnement propice à une paix progressive et durable. Cependant, les détracteurs et les acteurs de la consolidation de la paix estiment que la reconstruction au cœur d'un conflit actif, en l'absence d'un processus formel, ne peut conduire à une paix durable. Malgré les polémiques internes et externes divergentes concernant le PPRD-NW/SW, le gouvernement poursuit la phase II alors que des « poches de violence persistante » subsistent. L'article conclut que la population des régions anglophones du Cameroun conserve ses droits inaliénables au développement, malgré dix années de conflit sociopolitique et économique.

Key words: *right to development; reconstruction; peace building; Anglophone conflict; Cameroon*

1 Background and introduction

Following the violent crackdown on civic protests led by pro-Anglo-Saxon teachers and common law lawyers in 2016, the situation in the Anglophone regions has developed into a *de facto* armed conflict since 2017.[1] The confrontation between the security forces and the secessionist fighters, otherwise called 'Amba Boys', armed groups fighting for the independence of 'Ambazonia', infighting between these armed groups, as

1 G Crawford and others 'Exploring unarmed civilian self-protection in Cameroon's Anglophone conflict' (2024) Creating Safer Space Working Paper Series 04/2024, https://creating-safer-space.com/publications/working-paper-series/ (accessed 30 September 2026).

well as criminal violence have had serious humanitarian consequences.[2] Figures, though underestimates, indicate that over 6 000 civilians have been killed,[3] with an estimated 628 000 internally displaced persons, and 87 000 refugees in neighbouring Nigeria.[4] Hospitals are repeatedly attacked, most schools were closed, and public life almost came to a standstill.[5] In addition to the conflict in the Anglophone regions, Cameroon faces a reinforced Boko Haram in the far north and the incursion of Central-African militias in the eastern region. The armed conflict in the Anglophone regions has also exacerbated conflicts at the community level, as well as historic tensions between the north-west (NW) and the south-west (SW) regions. In the absence of a meaningful roadmap towards peace, attempts at resolving the armed conflict peacefully and addressing its root causes have not yet delivered expected results. Within the framework of redressing the Anglophone conflict that has been plaguing the English-speaking regions from 2016 to the present, the government of Cameroon officially instituted a Special Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development for the NW and SW regions (PPRD-NW/SW) in 2020. Structured into three pillars: recovery, resilience and reconstruction, the first phase of the implementation of the PPRD focused on the first two pillars from 2020 to 2025. The central research question that guides this chapter is how the PPRD-NW/SW contributes to the realisation of the right to development (RtD) in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, and the extent to which it reflects a model of national ownership capable of promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

To respond to this research question, this chapter draws on the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) triple-nexus frameworks that focus on the interlinkages and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace contributions within conflict and post-conflict reconstruction settings. Similarly, the AU perspective on the triple nexus based on security, humanitarian and development dimensions

2 Human Rights Watch (HRW) 'World Report 2023: Cameroon Events of 2022' (2023), https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/Cameroon (accessed 27 July 2026).
3 HRW (n 2); International Crisis Group 'Cameroon' (2023), https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon (accessed 27 July 2026).
4 UN OCHA, 2023.
5 Crawford and others (n 1).

offers a more interesting orientation of the core arguments related to reconstruction and peace building within the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon. The choice of the triple-nexus approach to analyse the findings in this chapter is inspired by the introduction of the PPRD-NW/SW within an ongoing conflict which continues to attract divergent views in relation to the sequencing and contributions to lasting peace in Cameroon. Similarly, the object of this study is shaped by the provisions of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development (DRtD) as contained in the UN General Assembly Resolution 41/128. Hence, this chapter seeks to critically assess the nexus between the PPRD and development in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon as a model of national ownership versus dependence on external support in seeking sustainable peace in Cameroon. The chapter is equally based on a case study and analytical approach that relies on both primary and secondary techniques of data collection and analysis. Primary data was collected through interviews with 12 key informants, four focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 32 participants (with eight participants per session) and participant observations across the NW/SW regions. Participants in both key informant interviews and FGDs were purposefully selected including religious leaders, traditional authorities, civil society actors, youth and women leaders who are all actively involved, contributing or advocating effective peace building in these regions. Participants for both interviews and FGDs were selected mainly based on their prior experience in peacebuilding, humanitarian and development, indigenes and residents of the NWSW regions, age, gender, and willingness to participate. Due to the very sensitive nature of the study, participants mainly provided verbal consent on conditions of anonymity, confidentiality, privacy including non-disclosure of any indicative personal details in the study outputs. Due to high insecurity concerns, two (02) of the FGDs, and eight (08) interviews were conducted in Buea in July and August 2025; while two (02) FGDs and four (04) interviews were conducted in Bamenda in November 2025. Participants did not agree to any audio recording of interviews and FGDs. Hence, the researchers had to keenly take detail notes during every session guided by the semi-structured interview questions and study objectives. The researchers were equally guided by the social science and humanities ethical procedures from the Heritage University Institute of Peace and Development Studies, Yaounde based on existing affiliations. Additional

primary data was curated from some existing laws, policies, government and partner reports related to the PPRD-NWSW. The primary data was computed and analysed manually based on the major thematic orientation and objectives of this study. Hence, most of the responses and findings from interviews and FGDs were mostly paraphrased or reported across different sections in this chapter. Secondary data was collected from existing scientific reports and other peer-reviewed publications related to the Anglophone conflict, and the RtD. The chapter begins with some conceptual and theoretical clarifications and perspectives, followed by an overview of the Anglophone conflict and the PPRD-NW/SW. It goes further to examine the first phase of the PPRD-NW/SW (2020-2025), contextual reflections within the triple-nexus framework, RtD, challenges, conclusions and recommendations regarding the next phase of reconstruction (2026-2030).

2 Conceptual and theoretical perspectives

To clarify and operationalise certain concepts in this chapter, it is useful to revisit some relevant terms including RtD, peacebuilding and reconstruction. The RtD is enshrined in the DRtD). Building on the post-World War II global commitments as provided for in the UN Charter of 1945 to promote peace, stability, and development anchored on the respect for all human rights and freedoms, the DRtD further seeks to accelerate the realisation of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[6] The core provisions of the DRtD relevant to this chapter include article 5, which stipulates:

> States shall take resolute steps to eliminate the massive and flagrant violations of the human rights of peoples and human beings affected by situations such as those resulting from apartheid, all forms of racism and racial discrimination, colonialism, foreign domination and occupation, aggression, foreign interference and threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, threats of war and refusal to recognise the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination.

6 SP Subedi 'Declaration on the Right to Development' United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law (2021) para 4, https://legal.un.org/avl/ (accessed 30 September 2026).

Article 8(1) further reiterates that '[s]tates should undertake, at the national level, all necessary measures for the realisation of the RtD and shall ensure, *inter alia*, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income'.[7]

The concept of peace building is widely associated with Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 Agenda for Peace, which addressed preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. Boutros-Ghali[8] considers peace building as 'action taken to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and consolidate peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict'. Similarly, the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, elaborated an 'integrated post-conflict peacebuilding approach' encompassing

> actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation ... to address the various factors that have caused or are threatening a conflict ... to build on or reorient such activities in ways designed to reduce the risk of a resumption of conflict and contribute to creating the conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery.[9]

On post-conflict reconstruction, many proponents and practitioners including in this chapter consider this concept and practice as synonymous to development. According to Uvin,[10] post-conflict development entails three core pillars including: rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. According to the 2006 PCRD Policy Framework, 'post-conflict reconstruction entails a comprehensive system of concurrent short-, medium- and long-term programmes designed to prevent

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7 UN General Assembly Resolution 41/128 Declaration on the Right to Development (DRtD) arts 5 & 8(1), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Development/ DeclarationRightDevelopment_en.pdf (accessed 5 October 2026).

8 B Boutros-Ghali 'Agenda For Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping' Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, United Nations, New York (1995) page 21 para 5.

9 United Nations '*The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa: Report of the Secretary-General*' (1998) UN Doc A/52/871–S/1998/318 para 63.

10 P Uvin 'Difficult choices in the new post-conflict agenda: The international community in Rwanda after the genocide' (2001) 22 *Third World Quarterly* 177-189.

escalation of disputes, avoid relapse into violent conflict, and strengthen and consolidate sustain peace'.

The framework stresses that post-conflict reconstruction aims at tackling root causes of conflict to establish the basis for social justice, victim-centred transitional justice, reconciliation and lasting peace. The process entails three phases, comprising 'the emergency phase, the transition phase and the development phase; and five dimensions: security; political transition; governance and participation; development; and coordination, management and resource mobilisation'.[11]

This perspective aligns with what Bush[12] contends, that post-conflict development involves both short-term humanitarian interventions and long-term development objectives. Peace building and reconstruction in this chapter are thus used from a perspective of measures that seek lasting solutions to root causes of violent conflict as articulated within the UN and AU circles and anchored on the RtD.

2.1 Revisiting the triple-nexus approaches and their relevance in conflict-affected settings

The UN humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP/triple nexus) approach seeks to foster improved coordination, collaboration and coherence of activities, especially in the context of destructive conflicts. This approach was initially framed as the 'New Way of Working' during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit before subsequent elaboration by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2019.[13] The HDP nexus emphasises the importance of addressing root causes of conflict, decreasing risks and vulnerabilities often experienced by the population within conflict contexts.[14]

11 R El Houdaigui 'Security in the face of new peacebuilding challenges' (2025) 1 *African Union Journal on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development: Peacebuilding at Work* 30.

12 KD Bush 'Beyond bungee cord humanitarianism: Towards a developmental agenda for peacebuilding' (1996) 17 *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 75-92.

13 AD Kunová & A Mélinon 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approaches in Conflict and Disaster Settings' (UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 2025), https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-02/hdp_nexus-en.pdf (accessed 27 July 2026).

14 See more details on ICVA (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) Briefing Paper 1, https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2021/08/Topic-One-Briefing-Paper-The-nexus-explained.pdf (accessed 27 July 2026).

Like the UN triple nexus, the AU peace, security and development nexus as elaborated in the 2006 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Policy Accord highlights the interlinkages and interdependent relationship between peace, security and development in Africa. The core argument of and focus on this nexus is that sustainable development cannot be realised without effective tackling of the root causes of conflict as often held by proponents of peace building. The AU further holds that sustainable peace and security demands comprehensive tackling of challenges related to socio-economic and cultural development. With this understanding, the AU depends on the active engagement of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy and efforts to be mainstreamed and implemented through various peace and security initiatives and processes across Africa.[15]

From the preceding nexus perspectives, it is evident that both the AU and the UN share a common understanding and expectations regarding the crucial need for interconnectedness, coordination, collaboration, coherence and even effective communication among actors and activities within various conflict settings unlike before. More importantly, both the UN and AU stress the crucial element of addressing the root causes of every conflict as the prerequisite for sustainable peace and development especially in post-conflict settings.

However, it remains unclear when precisely the operationalisation of the nexus starts and ends considering the disparity of conception and implementation of humanitarian, peace and development actions often undertaken by different local, national and international actors in conflict and post-conflict settings. Similarly, the application of the UN and the AU nexus perspectives sharply contrast with prevailing realities across different conflict settings such as in Cameroon. This gap thus serves as the basis for this chapter, which focuses on the complexities surrounding the PPRD-NW/SW plan within the context of an ongoing Anglophone conflict from 2016 to date.

15 El Houdaigui (n 10).

3 The Anglophone conflict and the PPRD-NW/SW

The so-called Anglophone conflict started in 2016 when lawyers and teachers protested peacefully against the increasing appointments of French-speaking judges and teachers to serve in the restive regions with poor mastery of the language and colonial heritage of the people.[16] Consequently, citizens from these two regions had for decades felt that they did not enjoy equitable access to their fundamental rights and services, including education, health care, infrastructure, public investments, economic opportunities and political and administrative participation.[17] State repression of these protests led to a wider civil society movement calling for a return to federalism. Further repression, including the banning of civil society organisations, arrest and detention of leaders, led to separatist voices taking centre stage and the formation of armed separatist groups.[18] This is a guerrilla war fought mainly in the rural areas in the two English-speaking regions, ongoing to date with less visible signs of resolution. Civilians are targeted by both warring parties, accused of either colluding with separatist fighters (by the military) or collaborating with the military (by the separatists). The state forces deployed across these restive regions subject civilians to arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, extrajudicial killings and rape, as well as collective destruction of homes and businesses, especially in suspected rural settlements.[19] Civilians are also subjected to assault, kidnapping and extortion by armed separatists for non-compliance with their orders (such as weekly 'ghost town' days and school boycotts), with the killing of individuals suspected (often with little evidence) of being traitors or *blacklegs.*[20] Sexual violence is pervasive and committed with impunity by both sides.[21] Figures, though underestimates, indicate that over 6 000

16 G Crawford and others 'Voices from "Ground Zero": Interrogating history, culture and identity in the resolution of Cameroon's Anglophone conflict' (2022), https://bit.ly/Voices-Ground-Zero-Report (accessed 30 September 2026).
17 Crawford and others (n 16).
18 As above.
19 Human Rights Watch 'World Report 2023'; Amnesty International 'Cameroon: With or against us: People of the north west region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias' (2023), https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/6838/2023/en/ (accessed 27 July 2026).
20 HRW (n 2); Amnesty International (n 19).
21 J Craig 'Sexual violence pervasive in Cameroon's Anglophone regions *Al Jazeera* 29 April 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/29/gender-based-

civilians have been killed,[22] with an estimated 628 000 internally displaced persons, and 87 000 refugees in neighbouring Nigeria.[23] Beyond rights violations across the restive regions, the government also shut down the internet in 2017 following escalation of the conflict, resulting in the loss of over 499 billion francs CFA (US $846 million), while unemployment rates across these regions further increased significantly.[24]

There have been a series of initiatives seeking the peaceful resolution of the Anglophone conflict to pave the way for sustainable peace-building processes across the two restive regions. Among such initiatives are the Bamenda negotiations led by the Ad Hoc Committee 2016 under former Prime Minister Philemon Yang at the time, the Major National Dialogue (MND) of 2019 under the auspices of the Prime Minister Chief Dr Dion Ngute mandated by President Paul Biya, the Swiss Facilitation process 2019-2022, the 'Canada Talks' in 2022-2023, the Secret Talks with incarcerated Separatists leaders at Kondegui Prison in 2023 and the alleged AU exploratory mission as disclosed by the former South African President Thabo Mbeki during an interview in May 2025. Unfortunately, these initiatives and attempted peace processes have not yielded the expected lasting solution to the conflict. Exceptionally, the MND galvanised more attention and investments amidst divergent views and criticisms related to the non-participation of pro-separatist activists/leaders. The PPRD-NW/SW thus emerged from one of the core resolutions of the MND in October 2019.

3.1 Genesis, evolution and peace-building dynamics of the PPRD-NW/SW

Within the framework of the Anglophone conflict and as one of the pathways in search for lasting peace, the government of Cameroon and its partners conducted extensive studies, including needs assessments and macro-economic analysis across the two restive regions of the NWSW

violence-pervasive-in-cameroons-anglophone-regions (accessed 18 November 2021).

22 HRW (n 2); International Crisis Group 'Cameroon' (2023), https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon (accessed 27 July 2026).

23 UN OCHA, 2023.

24 HN Bang & RA Balgah 'The ramification of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis: Conceptual analysis of a looming "complex disaster emergency"' (2022) 7 *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 6.

in 2018 to 2019. Based on findings and data generated from these studies, the PPRD was conceived and elaborated concurrently with the National Development Strategy (NDS 2020-2030) for Cameroon. Most importantly, during the period 30 September to 4 October 2019, Major National Dialogue (MND) in Yaounde, one of the commissions directly focused on 'development and reconstruction', which later became one of the crucial resolutions of the Dialogue. To further ensure implementation, the PM signed an Order in April 2020 reorganising the PPRD-NW/SW. According to the PM Order of April 2020, article 2 clearly outlined its focus around: Rehabilitation and development of basic infrastructure; economic revitalisation; and promotion of social cohesion. To ensure the realisation of these pillars, article 3 of the same PM Order detailed the operational structure of the PPRD-NW/SW, including (i) the Steering Committee; (ii) the National Coordination; and (iii) the Regional Follow-up Committees. To boost the implementation process of the PPRD-NW/SW and equally attract international legitimisation and funding, the government of Cameroon designated the UNDP as the implementing partner thus: 'A5(1) The Steering Committee is made up of the following: President: The Director of Cabinet of the Prime Minister; Co-president: The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Cameroon.'[25]

While the various government ministers are considered members, including 14 ministers in charge of: Economy, Planning and Regional Development; Finance; Territorial Administration; Secondary Education; Basic Education; Health; Urban Development; Decentralisation; Women Empowerment; Livestock; Agriculture; Public Works; Water and Energy; Youth Affairs. Other members include the Archbishop of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province; the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon; the President of the Cameroon Baptist Convention; a representative of the Muslim community; a representative of Youth Associations; a representative of Women Associations; the representative of each donor contributing to the PPRD-NW/SW; the Coordinator of the United Nations System in Cameroon; and the Representative of the Implementing Partner (UNDP).

25 See Prime Ministerial Order 31/CAB/PM of 3 April 2020.

As the implementing partner, and as provided for in article 13: (1) The government entrusts the implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ... as the 'Implementing Partner'. (2) ln conformity with the PPRD-NW/SW Programme document, the Implementing Partner shall have the following roles and responsibilities: implementation of all components of the PPRD-NW/SW in accordance with the current rules and procedures of the UNDP; fiduciary responsibility for the management of the funds made available to the PPRDNW/SW; establishment of a PPRD-NW/SW Management Unit; quarterly reporting on the technical and financial execution of the PPRD-NW/SW; preparation of resource mobilisation documents; carrying out the necessary studies aimed at optimising the implementation of the PPRDNW/SW ... article 14 – The Implementing Partner deploys his activities in accordance with the strategic orientations of the Steering Committee ... article 15 – The Implementing Partner shall work in collaboration with the South-West Development Authority (SOWEDA) for the South-West Region, the North-West Development Authority (MIDENO) for the North-West Region as well as the deconcentrated services and the regional and local authorities in the two regions.[26]

From the ensuing structural and operational framework of the PPRD-NW/SW, it is evident that the reconstruction of the two English-speaking regions has been a major area of interest to the government. Hence, it is vital to revisit the first phase of implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW from 2020 to 2025.

3.2 Analysis of the first phase of the PPRD (2020-2025)

Before delving into the discussion, it is worth recalling that the first phase of implementation followed the orientation laid down by the PM Order of April 2020 stated above. As part of its broader strategy, the PPRD-NW/SW strongly committed to the 'do no harm' principle and not 'leave anyone behind' in the NWSW as stressed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) championed by the UN since 2016. Similarly, the PPRD-NW/SW sought to ensure community ownership of projects by the population themselves. Commitment to the principle

26 As above.

of 'do no harm' directly informed a more conflict-sensitive approach to implementation of projects gradually in 'Green Zones' to parts of 'Orange Zones' and 'Red Zones' across the 65 council areas of the two regions. A more targeted communication approach by concealing information regarding projects was adopted, thereby ensuring protection of the lives of workers and beneficiaries of the projects. This communication approach is gradually changing due to the improved security situation.[27] Interestingly, and in the spirit of national ownership and legitimacy propounded by proponents of the triple-nexus approach, the government of Cameroon extensively flagged that

> the resources allocated to the implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW shall consist: – Allocations from the state budget; – Contributions from technical and financial partners; – Donations and legacies; – Other resources which could be allocated to the programme in accordance with the legislation in force.[28]

The extent to which the pursuit of national ownership and 'innovative peace building' has been reflected through the first phase of implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW remains a major source of debate as revealed in the subsequent analysis of funding and expenditures from 2020 to 2025.

3.2.1 Resource mobilisation and funding dynamics of the PPRD-NW/SW

Funding for the PPRD-NW/SW regions has primarily come from a combination of government resources (10 per cent), national and international donors (90 per cent). The entire reconstruction of the two regions was estimated at 2 500 billion XAF (about US $4.1 billion) with XAF 30 256 billion (about US $540 million) already mobilised by the end of 2024 through the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT).

In 2020, the government of Cameroon designated the UNDP as the Implementing Partner and Fund Manager of the PPRD-NW/SW. This was formalised with the signing of a financing agreement (FA) and the Project Document on 5 May 2020, amounting to a total of XAF

27 My Media Prime TV interview with the President of the Committee in charge of implementation of the PPRD in the NW/SW regions on 18 July 2025.
28 Art 16(1) PM Order (n 24).

89 682 938 100 (US $151 896 849.87) for a period of two years.[29] In May 2023, the Cameroon government through MINEPAT signed another funding agreement with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) worth €32 25 million (XAF 21 155 billion) for the implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW in compliance with a Presidential decree signed in February 2023 to authorize the loan arrangements.[30]

The Cameroonian private sector has also supported the government in implementing the PPRD-NW/SW. For instance, Cameroon's PM, Joseph Dion Ngute, on 31 July 2023, presided over the signing of two memoranda of understanding with the Professional Association of Credit Institutions of Cameroon (APECCAM) that provided XAF 250 million and the Islamic Development Bank that provided XAF 22 billion (Business and Finance International 2003). Support has also come from other private sector institutions such as Société Anonyme des Brasseries du Cameroun (SABC) that contributed 500 million XAF during the first phase in 2021 and pledged another 500 million XAF for the second phase.[31] The Groupement des Industries Meunières du Cameroun (GIMC) also provided XAF 200 million for the recovery plan.[32]

The international community was invited to contribute to the PPRD-NW/SW under the coordination of the UNDP. For instance, some key contributors include the government of Japan which provided 1,5 billion XAF through an agreement signed on 18 February 2021, and

29 UNDP Recovery Program for NW/SW, United Nations Development Programme https://share.google/E6s6V8cgcVqS16rot (accessed 16 October 2026).

30 Decree 2003/076 of 6 February 2023, authorising the Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development to sign with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) a loan agreement for an amount of €33.25 million, or approximately CFAF 21,155 billion for the financing of the Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the North-West and South-West Regions (PPRD), https://www.prc.cm/files/c5/55/72/0abb22de696e1d56fecd78c26eea8c54.pdf (accessed 27 July 2026).

31 'Cameroun: SABC Apporte une Nouvelle Contribution de 500 Millions FCFA pour la Reconstruction du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest' *Ecomatin*, https://ecomatin.net/cameroun-sabc-apporte-une-nouvelle-contribution-de-500-millions-fcfa-pour-la-reconstruction-du-nord-ouest-et-du-sud-ouest (accessed 19 July 2025).

32 MINEPAT 'Reconstruction du NOSO: Le Soutien du Secteur Privé', https://minepat.gov.cm/fr/2022/02/10/reconstruction-du-noso-le-soutien-du-secteur-prive/ (accessed 19 July 2025).

another 1,3 billion XAF in 2023. UNDP has so far contributed XAF 338 179 600 billion FCFA.

Table 1: Income and expenditure relating to the PPRD-NW/SW

No	Partner / Funding	Amount Received in XAF	Expenditure in XAF	Rate of execution	Balance in XAF
1	Government of Cameroon	25,322,037,754	15,533,703,896	61.34%	9,788,333,858
2	IsDB	17,136,876,625	11,027,313,946	64.35%	6,109,562,679
3	Government of Japan Phase I	1,592,289,600	1,592,289,600	100%	0
4	Government of Japan Phase II	1,339,247,354	1,339,247,354	100%	0
5	SABC	500,000,000	500,000,000	100%	0
6	GIMC	200,000,000	200,000,000	100%	0
7	APECCAM	250,000,000	250,000,000	100%	0
8	UNDP	338,179,600	277, 533, 040	82.16%	60,649,560
	TOTAL	46,678,630,933	30,717,885,196	65.81%	15,960,745,737

Source: PPRD-NW/SW 05 July 2025 (Presentation by Paul Tasong, Chairman of the Steering Committee for the PPRD-NW/SW at the 7th session of the Steering Committee in Bamenda-Northwest region).

While the PPRD-NW/SW has received some national and external funding, overall financing has been limited. The plan has struggled to attract sustained international donor investment from friendly nations due to security concerns, questions of legitimacy, and insufficient local participation. Many international partners have questioned or flagged the 'poor timing' of inception and rolling of the PPRD-NW/SW within the ongoing violent conflict without any formal ceasefire among warring parties or comprehensive peace process towards lasting peace.

3.2.2 Nature of interventions

Among other recommendations, the Major National Dialogue of 2019 recommended the reconstruction of the NWSW regions. President Paul Biya later established the PPRD-NW/SW with the objective to build resilience and development in these regions and to 'build

back better innovatively'. The PPRD-NW/SW is a component of the National Development Strategy (NDS 2020-2030) that was elaborated to reduce the effects of the crisis on populations of the restive regions and to catch up with the rest of the country. As in the case of the post-conflict Liberia, the government employed a short-term development goal, characterised by the provision of temporary shelter, and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of refugees, internally displaced persons and child soldiers. However, these approaches did not guarantee durable peace, implying a need to go beyond a short-term development goal to a long-term development goal, which will address illiteracy, poverty, underdevelopment and regional inequalities.[33] It is in this light that the Cameroonian government decided to anchor the PPRD-NW/SW around three main pillars to ensure durable peace, development, and reduce regional inequalities through rehabilitation and development of basic infrastructure, economic revitalisation and livelihood and the promotion of social cohesion.[34]

Quite significantly, the PPRD-NW/SW involves the reconstruction and rehabilitation of public infrastructure destroyed during the conflict. Under this pillar, the plan focuses on construction and rehabilitation of schools, healthcare facilities and water points, improvement of roads, rehabilitation and construction of bridges. Similarly, revitalisation of the two regions has focused on improving agricultural production, rehabilitation of farmlands, equipment and tools support to farmers, innovative production and processing, revitalisation of economic infrastructure, rehabilitation and construction of markets, support to agro-pastoral groups and support to youth start-ups. The PPRD-NW/SW has equally been seeking to rebuild trust within and among communities deeply affected by violence and displacement as has been the case in other post-conflict contexts in Africa such as Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and South Sudan. To promote social cohesion in the two regions, project implementation has focused on sports and socio-cultural activities, reconstitution of birth certificates and national identity cards, creation of dialogue platforms,

33 EB Gariba 'Post-conflict development in Liberia: Governance, security, capacity building and a developmental approach' *Accord* 13 May 2011, https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/post-conflict-development-in-liberia/ (accessed 22 July 2025).

34 UNDP, 2024.

training of local mediators, training of associations in crisis prevention and conflict management, provision of households with housing kits and establishment of caregiver groups.

3.2.3 Achievements and impact of the PPRD-NW/SW

Since the start of implementation of the recovery phase of the PPRD-NW/SW, some achievements have been recorded in the two regions amidst the uncertainty and violence. These achievements reflect initial steps towards rebuilding conflict-affected communities and restoring public confidence. To strengthen social cohesion in the two regions, 800 lost documents, including birth certificates and identity cards, have been issued. Eighty-eight socio-cultural events have been organised across various sub-divisions in the two regions as well, to grow community trust and understanding.[35]

The PPRD-NW/SW has overseen the reconstruction or rehabilitation of dozens of public buildings and infrastructure including schools, healthcare facilities, water points, roads, bridges, and so forth. For instance, 120 schools have been rehabilitated across both regions. In the NW region for instance, the Cameroon Baptist Convention School Complex, Islamic Nursery and Primary School Old Town, Catholic Nursery and Primary School Ngomgham. In the SW region, the rehabilitation of Government Technical High School (GTHS) Ombe and the Islamic School in Buea stand out. In the health sector, 63 healthcare facilities have been rehabilitated in both regions. Additionally, 50 water points have been rehabilitated or constructed in both regions. Administrative services resumed in certain localities due to the rebuilding of council offices such as the Bamenda III Council. Two DDR facilities in the two regions were also constructed under the PPRD-NW/SW. Fifteen Women Empowerment centres have been rehabilitated and equipped across both regions as well.[36]

To ensure accessibility in both regions, eight bridges have been rehabilitated (for instance, the Mile 4 Bridge in Nkwen-Bamenda), while

35 UNDP, 2023.

36 UNDP, Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development (PPRD) For the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, *Brochure*, 2025, page 11-14, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-10/brochure-undp_cameroon_pprd-nw_sw.pdf (accessed 16 October 2026).

22 roads are under reconstruction. Among some of the roads are the Babadjou-Bamenda road which cost XAF 80 billion, the Bamenda Ring Road at over XAF 89 billion and the Bamenda Inter-urban Crossing costing over XAF 60 billion. Similarly, the construction of the Kumba-Ekondo Titi road and the Bangem-Nguti roads have begun to the tune of XAF 40 billion and XAF 41 billion respectively. To ensure the availability of affordable cooking gas, an ultra-modern gas plant executed at XAF 6,5 billion was commissioned in Bamenda I subdivision in the NW region in May 2025. In the area of sports, a proximity football stadium executed to the tune of XAF 1 billion has also been commissioned in Bamenda.[37]

Economic revitalisation efforts under the PPRD-NW/SW have highly centred around agriculture. For example, since 2020, 1 725 hectares of land have been rehabilitated, 2 641 farmers supported with farm inputs, 104 agro-pastoral groups assisted, while the payment of salaries (and arrears) to some workers of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) amounting to XAF 20 billion has been paid.[38] However, the perception and perspectives regarding implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW vary among stakeholders.

3.2.4 Perspectives from different stakeholders

Perceptions and perspectives on the PPRD-NW/SW vary widely among stakeholders, reflecting deep-seated divisions regarding their purpose, timing and effectiveness within the broader context of the Anglophone conflict. These divergent views shape how the PPRD-NW/SW is perceived and whether it is seen as a genuine step toward sustainable peace, or a good initiative with wrong timing and with negative political undertones.

Proponents of the PPRD-NW/SW, especially within government circles, view the plan as a critical expression of national ownership and argue that it is a demonstration of the state's responsibility toward its citizens. According to them, the PPRD-NW/SW is not just a reconstruction initiative, but a sign that the state of Cameroon is resilient

37 'Presidential reconstruction plan: PM salutes steady progress in NW' *The Guardian Post*, https://theguardianpostcameroon.com/post/5145/fr/presidential-reconstruction-plan-pm-salutes-steady-progress-in-nw (accessed 21 July 2025).

38 As above.

and sovereign and can restore normalcy, reasserting the legitimacy of national institutions in the conflict-affected regions. Government officials emphasise that the plan is a locally led effort that is independent of externally imposed models, presenting it as an 'innovative approach' that responds to Cameroon's specific context. During a working visit of the National Coordinator of the PPRD-NW/SW in Bamenda in the NW region, he observed:[39]

> We are aware of the disbelief of many and the bad faith of others. A question has been addressed to me many times to know if we can rebuild when peace has not yet fully returned ... I'm saying now that the answer is a big yes ... because reconstruction is a pathway to peace ... it will be done gradually from peaceful and secured areas to the more unstable areas.

Government and some political actors argue that rebuilding infrastructure and supporting economic recovery are necessary steps to push for peace, not consequences of it, and that the PPRD-NW/SW should be seen as an accompanying process to ongoing security and dialogue initiatives. The state also views the private sector's commitment to the reconstruction of these regions as an act of active solidarity of Cameroonian companies with populations in distress.[40]

In contrast, civil society, peace builders and some local actors have expressed reservations about the PPRD-NW/SW. Critics argue that the plan is premature and should have kicked off when peace and normalcy return to the NW/SW. They add that reconstruction in the absence of a comprehensive and inclusive political dialogue is not sustainable. Furthermore, there are security concerns that have restricted the implementation of the plan to a few localities. Reconstruction projects are mostly carried out in areas where there is relative stability and little or no resistance from separatist fighters. This has resulted in a perception of injustice as some localities feel left out of the plan. This further validates the idea that reconstruction should have started when at least 'negative peace' normally returns to the two regions and when some of the root causes of the crisis have been addressed. This is in line with the former

39 Minister Paul Tasong, 27 June 2020.

40 Statement by the Minister Delegate of MINEPAT during the signing of the MOU between UNDP and two private sector actors, SABC and GIMC on 26 November 2022, https://minepat.gov.cm/fr/2022/02/10/reconstruction-du-noso-le-soutien-du-secteur-prive/ (accessed 30 September 2026).

Liberian President, Helen Johnson, who noted that 'reconstruction that does not address the underlying causes of war will not succeed'.[41] Some also highlight the lack of transparent mechanisms for community consultation and accountability as a weakness that goes to undermine the populations' trust in the initiative. Moreover, due to the insufficient consultation with local communities, the PPRD-NW/SW is being perceived as a top-down initiative that does not adequately include the affected populations. These challenges and limitations have therefore led to perceptions that the PPRD-NW/SW is more focused on restoring state control than about genuine reconciliation.

4 The PPRD-NW/SW within the triple-nexus framework and the RtD

As noted earlier, the PPRD-NW/SW has three phases: The recovery phase to last for over three years focuses on the return to peace, the restoration of the dignity of citizens, the upgrading of infrastructures and social equipment, the preparation of the ground for reconstruction and development activities. The second phase over a five-year period focused on the restoration of agro-industrial activities, the restoration of private sector activities and economic integration. The last phase focused on development over a ten-year period, to allow for a better positioning of the two regions through national economic growth.[42] It equally resonates with the AU 2006 PCRD framework as well as the UN HDP nexus that emphasises long-term development intervention as crucial to post-conflict reconstruction. Similarly, the preceding priority areas of intervention align with several provisions of the DRtD, especially article 8(1) which lays emphasis on basic needs and fundamental rights, especially equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income.

41 Transcript from Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia's Chatham House presentation on 'The challenges of post-war reconstruction – The Liberian 3Experience' 13 June 2011, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/138422/130611sirleaf.pdf (accessed 30 September 2026).

42 GF Memana 'Presidential reconstruction plan: The 5th session of the Steering Committees figures out its achievements', https://impactechosnews.com/presidential-reconstruction-plan-the-5th-session-of-the-steering-commitees-figures-out-its-achievements/ (accessed 21 July 2025).

While some of these services have been effectively realised, within the framework of quick-impact projects (QIPs), which are intended to deliver immediate benefits, some especially related to employment opportunities and major economic transformation of the regions remain wanting. This is the case of the then second highest employer in Cameroon, the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) whose production capacity was reduced to barely 26 per cent as of 2018.[43] The QIPs realised so far include the construction and rehabilitation of schools, healthcare facilities, markets, roads, bridges and water points, although neither the government nor partners including UNDP have provided specific data on the exact number of projects realised. Most of the study participants acknowledged the involvement of community stakeholders, especially religious leaders, traditional authorities, community development associations and local administrative authorities in the implementation of the PPRD-NWSW as their right and obligation towards development of their communities. The largely discreet approach to stakeholder involvement and participation in the reconstruction process, on the one hand, ensured compliance with the 'do no harm principle' and conflict sensitivity considering that the NWSW regions were (and are) still characterised by violent armed conflict. On the downside, such an approach to citizen participation in their own development process was extensively flagged by the study participants for rather enhancing corruption, discrimination, exclusion, limited transparency and accountability as well as bad governance that all constitute some of the drivers of the Anglophone conflict. Similarly, some participants argued that such an approach to reconstruction rather reinforces the very marginalisation tendencies, and threats to the right to self-determination through participatory and autonomous decision-making processes driven by the Anglophones,[44] as provided for in article 8(1) of the DRtD, earlier stressed in articles 22(1) and (2) of the African

43 Bang & Balgah (n 23) 12; World Bank 'The socio-political crisis in the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon: Assessing the economic and social impacts (January 2021) Washington, DC, USA 23, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/795921624338364910/pdf/The-Socio-Political-Crisis-in-the-Northwest-and-Southwest-Regions-of-Cameroon-Assessing-the-Economic-and-Social-Impacts.pdf (accessed 15 April 2026).

44 P Konings & FB Nyamnjoh 'The Anglophone problem in Cameroon' (1997) 35 *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 207-229.

Charter, that '[s]tates shall have the duty, individually or collectively, to ensure the exercise of the RtD'.[45]

Beyond the ensuing discussion regarding the triple nexus and RtD for inhabitants of the Anglophone regions, this study further revisits the humanitarian and peace interventions in the same context of the PPRD-NWSW.

4.1 Intersections between humanitarian assistance, peace initiatives and the RtD

From the findings regarding implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW, it is evident that the plan so far fits within the emergency (humanitarian) and short-term interventions of reconstruction aimed at preventing further internal displacements, return and resettlement of IDPs during conflict while creating an enabling environment for medium-term interventions to be implemented.[46] The PPRD-NW/SW equally demonstrates a certain degree of meeting context-based cultural and political realities, local and national ownership as well as relative coordination among actors especially the government, UNDP (lead implementing partner), regional and local development actors including civil society actors across the restive regions.[47]

However, like in other post-conflict reconstruction contexts in Africa, such as in Liberia, DRC and Somalia, the PPRD-NW/SW falls short of several expectations, including controversial timing of the plan amidst ongoing violence; limited resources; poor prioritisation and geographic distribution of designed interventions; poor coordination; collaboration and communication among various actors and the target population/communities, to cite these few. As Busumtwi-Sam noted, most post-

45 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted 27 June 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 ILM 58 (1982), entered into force 21 October 1986.

46 This argument is further developed by Dr Gloria Nguya, International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Nadia Siddiqui, Co-Director, Social Enquiry, New York/Erbil, in their August 2020 Research Briefing Paper to the UNSG High Level Panel on Internal Displacement: Workstream 3 (International System and Solutions), https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/idrp_hlp_submission_ws3_triple_nexus.pdf (accessed 30 September 2026).

47 PPRD-NW/SW 7th Evaluation Session of the Steering Committee in Bamenda July 2025.

conflict development processes are often challenged by a lack of third window funding, slow responses to peacebuilding, concrete fulfilment of financial pledges from many donors especially when the conflict no longer enjoys public attention or international visibility as the case of the Anglophone conflict.[48] This claim, however, reignites a critical debate regarding the minimal demonstration of individual and collective state efforts towards promoting, a new international economic order based on sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and co-operation among all states, as enshrined in article 3 of the DRtD. Hence, the more challenging argument advanced by some participants regarding the extent to which the PPRD-NWSW can genuinely guarantee effective ownership and participation of the people, state sovereignty, dependence on international collaboration, resources and sustainability without any compromise.

The preceding claim extensively corroborates earlier arguments by some national and international actors that the zeal to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity has been a core justification to reluctance by the Cameroon government to effectively commit to any internationally facilitated peace negotiation as was the case with the 'Swiss Facilitation Process' and later the 'Canada Pre-talks'.[49] Regardless of the political lapses of the government and positions of the so-called international community to not fund reconstruction and development amid ongoing conflict, it is the citizens of these restive regions that continue to be deprived of their RtD for 10 years of conflict and counting. No doubt, the first phase of implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW falls short of effectively paving the way for addressing the root causes of the Anglophone conflict compared to the experience in Liberia between 2006 to 2009.[50] The post-conflict reconstruction in Liberia is said to have comprehensively addressed root causes of the conflict thanks

48 See https://www.nrc.no/news/2025/june/cameroon-the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crisis.

49 J Cho 'Making peace within hierarchy: Seeing international peacemaking, world order, and history from Cameroon' (2025) 51 *Review of International Studies* 820-838; International Crisis Group (ICG) 'Canada initiative offers new opportunity for Cameroon peace process' *Statement/Africa* February 2023, https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/canada-initiative-offers-opportunity-cameroon-peace-process. (accessed 20 December 2025).

50 For more details about the post-conflict reconstruction experience in Liberia: https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/034-Liberia-Summary-min-1.pdf (accessed 30 September 2026).

to the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, steadfast leadership of President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson elected in 2005, extensive participation of local population and communities, collaboration and support from multiple UN and other international funding agencies and actors under the auspices of the United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL).[51] This is unlike the case of the PPRD-NWSW whose slow-paced implementation has been attributed to reconstruction amid ongoing conflict, limited participation of the population and timid involvement of international partners and friendly nations on whom the government was counting for more support.

4.2 Challenges from the first phase of implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW (2020-2025)

Despite the progress made during the first phase of implementation, this study found that the PPRD-NW/SW encountered several challenges thereby limiting its impact across the two target regions. The challenges revolved around prevailing insecurity, limited trust, limited funding, poor road infrastructure, among others, discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Findings revealed that one of the major challenges facing the PPRD-NW/SW has been persistent insecurity across many parts of the Anglophone regions. For instance, frequent attacks, lock-downs, ghost towns, kidnappings for ransom, killings and attacks on infrastructure, especially in the NW region, continue to disrupt reconstruction efforts and prevent access to several communities. As noted by several human rights reports, both warring parties have been accused of multiple human rights abuses against civilians.[52] Although the situation has relatively improved, especially across the SW, it remains evident that many inhabitants across these regions cannot effectively enjoy their RtD, including through the PPRD-NWSW. Hence, the Japanese-funded projects have mainly been implemented in Fako Division-SW region,

51 D Forti and L Connolly 'The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition' Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition," International Peace Institute, December 2018, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/1812_Liberias-Peacekeeping_-Transition.pdf (accessed 16 October 2026).

52 HRW (n 2); Amnesty International (n 18).

based on established variables of relative stability that create an enabling environment to pursue the RtD. A crucial issue, however, resurfaces as to what, why and how the state of Cameroon should do or not do to create national and international conditions favourable to the realisation of the RtD as stated in article 3(1) of the DRtD.

Another significant challenge has been the limited trust and legitimacy from the populations regarding the plan. According to some participants, there is a feeling of exclusion from the planning and decision-making processes among many local communities and civil society actors, contrary to the principle of participation, self-determination and autonomy in pursuing the RtD consistent with the DRtD, the African Charter and the Vienna Declaration and Action Programme. From article 8(2) of the DRtD, '[s]tates should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realisation of all human rights'. However, many participants argued that the PPRD-NW/SW is being perceived among the local populations of the restive regions as another *top-down* initiative that systematically excludes them from own development process. This claim thus begs the question as to what extent local ownership and sustainability can be guaranteed for such a huge development agenda and process.

Additionally, findings revealed that limited funding and resource mobilisation have slowed down the implementation of the PPRD-NWSW. Despite multiple pledges from the government and international partners, concrete financial disbursements have been low and inconsistent, leading to delays in project execution as local actors and UNDP, the leading implementation partner revealed. Hence, the concerns from some potential donors, such as China, regarding security threats and governance concerns. As the Prime Minister of Cameroon noted, 'there are still countries like China, that consider the NW and NW regions as red zones and will not join others to help us'.[53] The Chinese and Indian governments, however, have donated huge consignments of rice to boost the Cameroonian government's humanitarian response to the victims of the Anglophone crisis. While recognising the kind humanitarian gesture, many participants retorted that such donations neither help the regions towards lasting peace, nor contribute to

53 D Ngute, Personal statement during the 7th Steering Commission session on the PPRD-NW/SW, Bamenda, North-West Region, Cameroon (6 July 2025).

community-driven development. Similarly, while the PPRD-NW/SW includes social cohesion components, many participants argued that these efforts are not robust enough to address the root causes of the conflict or promote sustainable solutions to extensively transform the conflict.

Moreover, the study found that there have been serious coordination challenges among stakeholders, including government ministries, the implementing partner (UNDP), local councils, religious institutions and NGOs, thereby resulting in duplication of efforts in some cases and neglect in others. While this poses a major challenge within the context of the PPRD-NWSW, it has been found to be one of the most delicate issues to manage when it comes to global partnerships, international relations, and collaboration between state and non-state actors for mutual interest. Even among the SDGs, Goal 17 on global partnerships has been widely recognised as the most critical towards effective realisation of all the goals. No wonder the systematic emphasis on state-state cooperation, global partnerships and the importance of collective response to issues that threaten or contribute to global peace, security, respect for human rights and the RtD for everyone that cut across multiple international and regional human rights instruments such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ICESCR, the African Charter, the DRtD, among others.

Finally, this study uncovered persistent misconceptions and interpretations of the RtD through self-determination and the special status which 'offers' the populations of the two Anglophone regions more autonomy to decide and drive their development. The government of Cameroon promulgated Law 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 relating to the Bill to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities (GC-RLA), enacted in the aftermath of the Major National Dialogue organised from 30 September to 4 October 2019.[54] It is this law that provides for the 'special status' of the Anglophone regions by granting them such structures including the Regional Assembly and House of Chiefs intended to boost the political, economic, social and cultural autonomy of these regions as well as increased participation of the people in local governance. Several participants in this study expressed

54 Crawford and others (n 1).

cautious optimism, highlighting that had such efforts towards boosting local participation in decision-making and development processes been promoted earlier, the Anglophone problem would not have degenerated into the corporate crisis in October 2016 and later escalating into a violent armed conflict between government forces and pro-secessionist fighters in 2017.[55] Unfortunately, pro-secessionist activists from the Anglophone regions rather criticised this government effort describing it as 'too little, too late' to deter them from pursuing their right to self-determination.[56] Some of these so-called Southern Cameroonian activists further recalled earlier attempts at litigation, negotiations and ruling of the African Commission that had, among other recommendations, urged the complainants (the Southern Cameroons National Council – SCNC and the Southern Cameroons People's Organisation – SCAPO) in May 2009 to engage in constructive dialogue with the government of the Republic of Cameroon in view of effectively addressing various rights violations as tabled by the complainants. The case was brought by leaders and representatives of the SCNC and the SCAPO. While the African Commission's decision did not find any violation of article 20 of the African Charter, especially pertaining to 'absolute right to self-determination/secession', it noted several other human rights violations across multiple articles of the African Charter, including discrimination (article 2); threats to life and physical integrity during protests (articles 4 and 5); denial of fair trial guarantees (articles 7 and 26); restrictions on assembly (article 11); and a failure to domesticate Charter obligations (article 1).[57] While this ruling and subsequent government policies, such as introduction of the special status to the Anglophone regions, continues to receive divergent interpretations, this study rather establishes that translating provisions of the DRtD, especially article 5, which focuses on measures to tackle ... threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, *threats of war and refusal to recognise the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination,* remain subject to continuous negotiations and dialogue between states and non-state actors drawing from the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

55 As above.
56 M Bone '"We had no choice": The emergence of secessionist violence in Anglophone Cameroon' MPhil Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2021; Konings & Nyamnjoh (n 42).
57 *Gunme & Others v Cameroon* (2009) AHRLR 9 (ACHPR 2009).

5 Conclusion and recommendations

This study so far clearly demonstrates that the PPRD-NW/SW focuses mainly on reducing the effects of the sociopolitical conflict that has affected communities of the Anglophone regions of Cameroon from 2016 to date.[58] The plan prioritises community-based recovery, in which local ownership is critical for effective implementation, relevance and sustainability. Findings and analysis in this study extensively delve into the triple-nexus (humanitarian-development-peace) framework as elaborated by the UN and AU from a rights-based approach anchored on the DRtD, the African Charter, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, among other human rights instruments. Some of the core findings include: The PPRD-NWSW resonates with provisions of the DRtD, especially article 5 and 8 (1&2) with emphasis on the responsibility of every state to create a favourable environment that permits citizens to individually and collectively exercise and enjoy their RtD such as access to quality education, health care, food, shelter, among others, including in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The study equally situates the complex environment within which the PPRD-NWSW has been implemented across the Anglophone regions with minimal international financial support due to arguments for and against reconstruction within an ongoing conflict versus during the post-conflict era. Despite this contentious atmosphere, the committee responsible for the implementation of the PPRD-NWSW successfully mobilised over 600 billion XAF of its 2 500 billion XAF budget between the years 2020 to 2025. While dependence on external and international funding is considered an international obligation as provided for in the DRtD and various human rights instruments, it equally rekindled the difficult question of how the Cameroonian government can protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity, national ownership and sustainability of the reconstruction plan reflective of the famous saying 'African solutions to African problems'. There equally persists misconceptions and divergent interpretations of article 5 of the DRtD on the right to self-determination (secession within the context of the Anglophone

58 T Mbonteh 'Crises regions: The path to reconstruction' *Cameroon Tribune* 6 November 2024, https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/67818/fr.html/crises-regions-the-path (accessed 22 July 2025).

conflict) as opposed to fostering political, economic, social and cultural autonomy and local participation as enshrined in the 2019 law granting the special status to the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Notwithstanding some significant progress made during the first phase of implementation of the PPRD-NWSW, this study noted that the programme and process witnessed several challenges and limitations, including persistent insecurity, limited trust and legitimacy of the process and implementing partners, limited funding and mobilisation of all relevant resources, limited participation, transparency and accountability of the process, poor coordination and politicisation of the process as well as misconceptions and disagreements around the timing, sequencing and choice of actors involved during the implementation process. Despite these challenges, this study advances the following policy-oriented, programmatic, strategic and context-specific recommendations that can render the implementation of phase two of the PPRD-NWSW more effective and relevant to the concerned Anglophone regions and communities.

To ensure that reconstruction is carried out effectively and in all the localities affected, security and access for humanitarian, peace-building and development actors should be improved. This will facilitate safe access to those communities that have been underserved and allow for equitable distribution of projects. To achieve this security, the state and non-state armed groups must agree to a ceasefire and the protection of humanitarian, peace-building and development actors within the spirit of collaboration, individual and collective responsibilities as elaborated in the 1986 DRtD and other relevant human rights instruments.

To rebuild this trust and legitimacy among the affected communities, grassroots actors such as the civil society, traditional and religious leaders, council and regional assembly authorities, must be actively involved in the planning, decision-making and implementation phases of the projects in their communities. Establishing community mechanisms and advisory councils and holding town hall meetings will ensure the community's needs are well taken care of as well as fostering the spirit of citizen participation in the exercise and enjoyment of their RtD.

There is a need for a strategic resource mobilisation plan that will improve funding and resource mobilisation. This plan will have to address the concerns of potential and interested international donors which are critical for attracting their support. This can include a ceasefire and

comprehensive peace process (more intentional and political dialogue) between the Cameroonian government and pro-secessionist activists and non-state armed groups as earlier ruled by the African Court and subsequent national and international voices calling for genuine and inclusive dialogue to end the Anglophone conflict.

This study thus concludes that despite the shortcomings associated with the first phase of the implementation of the PPRD-NWSW, this reconstruction plan and process serve as a significant opportunity for citizens of the conflict-affected Anglophone regions to enjoy their fundamental RtD amid ongoing conflict and during an eventual post-conflict era. The success of this reconstruction process largely depends on the political will from the government and state of Cameroon based on its capacity to intentionally seek more inclusive, participatory, just and sustainable measures towards an end to the Anglophone conflict and effective post-conflict reconstruction and development of these regions within the spirit of the 2006 AU PCRD, the 1986 DRtD and other relevant human rights instruments that seek to 'address the needs of countries emerging from conflict, including the needs of affected populations; prevent escalation of disputes; avoid relapse into violence; address the root causes of conflict; and consolidate sustainable peace'.[59]

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