

## **The role of Non-Governmental Organisations in basic education in the Far North Region of Cameroon (1990-2012)**

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### **Abstract**

This paper evaluates the contribution of NGOs to the basic education sector in Far North Cameroon. This sector faces many problems due to lack of infrastructures, teachers and traditional skills, which do not favour the education of girls. Because of economic crises, successive Cameroonian governments since 1990 have been unable to fix the problems in this sector. With all these difficulties, the Far North Region is lagging behind as far as education is concerned. The promotion of education for all as of 1990 and the political landscape that introduced freedom of association in Cameroon brought in new partners, including NGOs. They support the government, which does not have enough resources to cover the population's education requirements. Their policy is based on the promotion of education, reinforcement of education staff's skills, awareness of the population and material and infrastructural support. This policy is highly significant in the basic education sector. The use of an elaborate methodology is required to achieve these goals. In addition to written documentation, the main task consists of field research and participation. This requires a questionnaire, interviews and the careful selection of field personnel.

**Keywords:** national NGOs, international NGOs, contribution, basic education, Far North region, Cameroon

*O papel das organizações não governamentais no ensino básico na região do Extremo Norte dos Camarões*

### **Resumo**

Este texto tem por objetivo avaliar a contribuição das ONG para o setor do ensino básico na região do Extremo Norte dos Camarões. Este sector da educação enfrenta múltiplos problemas relacionados com a falta de infraestruturas e de professores, para além da cultura tradicional não favorecer a educação das raparigas. Em virtude da crise económica, e desde 1990, os sucessivos governos camaroneses têm sido incapazes de resolver os problemas que o setor da educação enfrenta, tendo estas dificuldades originado atrasos no desenvolvimento da educação na região do Extremo Norte dos Camarões. A promoção da Educação para Todos, a partir de 1990, e o cenário político que introduziu a liberdade de associação nos Camarões trouxe novos par-

ceiros a este país, entre os quais organizações não governamentais. Estas apoiam o Governo, que não dispõe de meios suficientes para cobrir as necessidades educacionais da sua população. A política educativa que desde então tem sido desenvolvida, baseada na promoção da educação, no reforço das capacidades do pessoal docente, na sensibilização da população, nos apoios em material e em infraestruturas, tem uma importância significativa ao nível do ensino básico. No entanto, de forma a garantir o alcance dos objetivos é necessário o desenvolvimento de metodologias apropriadas. Para além das análises documentais é prioritário desenvolver investigações no terreno de forma participada e tal implica o recuso a questionários, a entrevistas e a escolha criteriosa de interlocutores no terreno.

**Palavras-chave:** ONG nacionais, ONG internacionais, contribuição, ensino básico, região do Extremo Norte, Camarões

Historically, the education of young people has always been societies' main concern. In both traditional and modern societies, the training of youth always plays a central role. From initiation in our traditional societies to modern schools currently in effect, education stands as the founding element of any development. Economic growth, poverty reduction, improvement of the status of women, mastery of demography, employment and health are objectives directly related to the progress of education. Due to of the primary place held by education, the Cameroonian Government has invested in improving the effectiveness of education since the first hours of independence. Despite all these efforts, the situation in the basic education sector is not brilliant. It suffers from inadequacy, lack of teachers and infrastructure. Mindful that the fight against under-development moves hand in hand with that against ignorance and the scarcity of financial resources that impede development of the education system, successive Cameroon governments since the 1990s have called for support from many national and international partners. This article provides an overview of basic education in the Far North region, and presents different aspects of intervention by NGOs in this area.

### **I – Conceptual and theoretical framework**

For a better understanding of our work, it is imperative to focus on the conceptual and theoretical basis of the search terms. For the most part, there are two concepts: NGO and basic education.

The concept of an NGO cannot be defined in isolation. To understand it better, we need to discuss the concept of civil society.

## Conceptualisation of the study

### *Civil society*

The concept of civil society is not new at all. It can be traced back to Ancient Greece, that is to say, more than 2000 years before our era. The famous philosopher Aristotle used the expression “*koinonia politiké*” (“civic society”, and later, in Latin, “*societas civilis*”) to describe a dominant assembly with no hierarchy made up of people who shared the same points of view, what was then called “polite”, i.e., the civic or political society. Some wealthy male citizens decided together to defend their interests in this association, without interference from any state body (Cvetek & Daiber, 2009, p. 6).

The idea of a civil society as a sphere of action to differentiate it from the state was born during the Enlightenment (the 17 and 18th centuries). It acquired its modern character, thanks to authors such as John Locke and Charles Montesquieu. The focus was on a society in which human beings lived together in a community of citizens who had the right to speak. It had to be free and autonomous and enjoy the right of association, of cooperation and the freedom to decide the most important issues in the public debate (Cvetek & Daiber, 2009, p. 8).

In a nutshell, the civil society can be defined as:

an area within the society, which is found between the spheres state, economic and private – or still: between State, market and family. This area is considered as a public space composed of our days, by a large number of groups more or less independent of the State, more or less well organized, with a range of different forms of organization such as the initiative group, the clubs or associations (Arenhövel, 2000, p. 60).

The best-known forms of civil society organisation are clubs, associations, trade unions, citizens’ initiatives, support groups, mutual initiatives, non-profit organisations and the NGOs (non-governmental organizations). NGOs hold a special place among these different forms of organisation and are often referred to in the literature as “engines of civil society”.

### *Concept of NGO*

The expression NGO generally refers to a non-profit group, association or movement working in the field of participatory development or community. It also includes many international, national and even local organisations. In general, NGOs derive their origins primarily from two historic tenets. They are born either from the Christian tradition of charity and assistance or from political liberalism or simply the state’s respect for fundamental human rights, such as freedom of association, assembly, thought, conscience and religion. The proliferation of NGOs has been accentuated by the two world wars, regional or civil wars,

natural disasters, famine and epidemics. Initially, western NGOs were first devoted to assisting people who ravaged by wars in their continent. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s that NGOs directed their efforts toward developing countries. In the 80s, called “the NGO decade”, their number, quality and fame contributed to the evolution of international relations (Beigbeder, 1992, p. 4). In the framework of this study, all the organisations and associations working in the same sector of basic education in the Far North are regarded as NGOs.

#### *The concept of basic education*

The aim of defining basic education is closely linked to the need to clarify the various concepts commonly used to describe the first few years of formal education: basic, elementary, primary and fundamental education, learning needs, and so on. The term “fundamental education” appears in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). The term “elementary” is used in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “Primary” education is used frequently and appears in Article 4 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. The concept of basic education did not exist when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed and it uses the word “elementary”. For this reason, “basic education” was not used in subsequent instruments. For a long time, UNESCO worked on a programme of “elementary education”. The World Conference on Education for All in Chom Thian promoted the concept of basic education, which also featured in the work of the Delors Commission and in its report entitled “Learning: the treasure within” (1996). Since the international community is committed to EFA goals and basic education is at the heart of that initiative, the concept has now been adopted internationally. Moreover, General Comment No. 13 on Article 13 of the International Covenant, drafted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) together with UNESCO (December 1999), elucidates the full scope of the right to education and provides a number of references to basic education (para. 9):

The Committee obtains guidance on the proper interpretation of the term ‘primary education’ from the World Declaration on Education for All which states: ‘The main delivery system for the basic education of children outside the family is primary schooling. Primary education must be universal, ensure that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied and take into account the culture, needs and opportunities of the community’ (Article 5). ‘Basic learning needs’ are defined in Article 1 of the World Declaration. While primary education is not synonymous with basic education, there is a close correspondence between the two. In this regard, the Committee endorses the position taken by UNICEF: ‘Primary education is the most important component of basic education’ (UNESCO, 2009, pp. 5-6).

## Theorisation of the study

### *The theory of partnership*

A partnership is a social process based on participation. It is a condition for local functioning, a co-management process and features in organisations' strategies for adapting to economic changes that have an impact on the funding of activities. Faced with the problems of resources and jurisdiction, partnerships are essential to the success of modern organisations.

In practice, a partnership can be regarded as "an agreement or a combination of individuals, companies, institutions or countries with common interests or with a view to joint action". In the educational context, partnerships can take several forms. According to Pelpel (1997), they are three, event based, cyclical and structural partnerships. Those based on events are of short duration and aim at enriching and illustrating a teaching. A partnership usually occurs on the initiative of a teacher and involves an external actor, to pay a visit to a site or a cultural event. It favours collective experiences, but may lose its pedagogical substance to tourism. The cyclical type puts into play partners who run an educational action project. The structural type alternates theoretical teaching and practical training periods. This is the type of partnership used in vocational education. In this study, the partners are students' parents, NGOs, administrative authorities, religious and cultural entities, teachers and students.

### *Systems theory*

System theory regards an organisation as a whole structurally and functionally coherent element of a broader system in an environment. It is based on the premise that everything is a system or can be conceptualized in the logic of a system. This principle was formalised by Bertalanffy (1968) in *General System Theory*, but there are multiple databases, the main one being the cybernetic movement. Cybernetics is the art of ensuring the effectiveness of action. Systems theory describes the reality observed from the point of view of operation of the object and suggests logical links between factors. It leads to the discovery that simplistic linear causality is not sufficient to explain things and that correlations between factors are very numerous. Thus, systems theory helps us understand the nature of NGOs' contribution in the field of education in the Far North. It then allows us to take account of the influence of socio-political and cultural pressures on schools' relations with the other elements in the system.

The above-mentioned theories allow us to analyse the study object with scientific accuracy.

## II- Status of basic education

Since independence, the Cameroon education sector has always been made a point of honour. While in the first decades after independence, Cameroon responded effectively in one way or another to problems in the education sector, the crisis in the late 1980s worsened these difficulties, including a shortage of teachers infrastructure.

### *The teaching staff*

The curve in the number of teachers did not remain static from 1990 to 2012. The first decade (1990-2000) was marked by a sharp decline. The number went from 2,272 teachers in 1989-1990 to 1,805 in the 1998 school year (MINEFI, 2000, p. 40). This decrease can be explained by the economic crisis, whose main corollary was a structural adjustment programme that forced some teachers to abandon their work. The judgement of recruitments and closure of the GTTC<sup>1</sup> between 1991 and 1996 further worsened this situation. Since 2000, the strength of the primary school teachers has been steadily on the rise. From 2,691 in 2000 to 9,056 teachers of all types and levels (public, private, licensee, parents and communal teachers)<sup>2</sup>. The reopening of the GTTCs and the recruitment of teachers by the state in most divisions of the region favoured the increase in their number. In spite of this figure, which seems to be astronomical, the reality in the Far North remains a concern. The evolution of the student-teacher ratio between 1996 and 1998 is proof of this. The region had the highest ratio in the country (101 students for one teacher in 1996-1997 and 90 in 1997-1998) whereas the normal ratio is 60 students per teacher. In 2007, despite some improvements, the situation remained almost the same with 81 students per teacher<sup>3</sup>. This ratio remained stable until 2011 when the need was evaluated at 2,902 teachers<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to this shortage, there is another which is qualitative and which raises the problem of non-qualified teachers in the basic education sector. Faced with the state's inability to provide schools with trained teachers and the growing need for training, students' parents in Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) support the actions by the state to increase teaching staff. However, the majority of teachers hired by the municipality and students' parents have not received adequate training. In 2003, for example, out of 6,383 primary school teachers, only 1,365 were in the public service, 1,465 were trained but not supported by

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1 General Teacher's Training College.

2 Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education, *School year 2010-2011 report* (2011, p. 45).

3 Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education, *Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Basic Education 2006-2007*, p. 97.

4 Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education, *School year 2010-2011 report* (2011, p. 45).

the state and 2,684 had had no training<sup>5</sup>. The problem is not limited to the lack of teaching staff; it is also related to infrastructure.

### *Infrastructure*

Infrastructure in basic education has evolved though this did not always involve the creation of new schools. Between 1991 and 1992, the Far North had approximately 3,058 classrooms 2,774 of which were for the public sector and 284 for the private sector. 1,912 public sector rooms were built with finite materials, 360 with semi-finite materials and 484 were provisional. 231 of the private school classrooms were in finite materials, 43 in semi-finite materials and 10 in provisional materials<sup>6</sup>.

From 2000 to 2011, the number of classrooms increased from 3,811 (430 private and public) to 7,582, of which 4,996 rooms were in finite, 347 in semi-finite and 2,250 in provisional materials. In 2000, 2,399 public sector rooms were in finite materials as opposed to 356 in the private sector. Constructions in provisional materials number 801 in the public and 22 in the private sector. As far as the other school facilities in the Far North region are concerned, the basic education sector has 555 administrative blocks, 72 closed schools, 90 have a washbasin and 1,224 have toilets. 1,880 schools have offices, 2,660 chairs for teachers, 5,565 wall charts, 85,606 tables and benches for 211,476 seats, 35 typewriters. In the whole region, 48 schools have a computer and 8 have photocopiers<sup>7</sup>.

### *The status of school enrolment*

The Far North is one of Cameroon's largest regions, with a predominantly young population, and is undereducated. This is visible at two levels. First, it has a lower enrolment rate than other regions and second it has a deficit between the school-age and educated population. From 1989 to 1998, enrolment rates in the Far North ranged from 52% to 36.8%, while the Central region, the most educated, had a rate of 126.7% and 113% respectively for the same years (Yaya & Tchameni, 2000). These statistics show that low school enrolment in the Far North is still a reality. There is also a disparity between boys and girls. The school enrolment rate for boys is higher than that of girls.

### *A gender-based disparity*

School attendance by young girls in the Far North is still problematic. There has been a significant difference between girls' and boys' enrolment rates since 1990. For girls they fell from 33.3% in 1990 to 22.2% in

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5 Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education, *School year 2003-2004 report*, p. 22.

6 Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education, *Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Basic Education 1991-1992*, p. 5.

7 Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education, *Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Basic Education 1991-1992*, pp. 28-30.

1997, while those of boys were 69.7% and 48.9% respectively. In 2007, female enrolment was 77.86% in primary school, but this rate included pupils from 6 to 11 years and 6 to over 11. The girls' enrolment rate decreases as we advance in the school system. This situation can be explained by the customs and traditions in this part of the country. In a socio-cultural context which does not favour women, a girl's future depends on the fate chosen for her by men. Early and forced marriages may also explain the low enrolment rate for girls. This unavoidably leads to an increase in school drop-outs.

#### *A high rate of school drop-outs*

Out of 1,000 students enrolled in the first year of primary school in the Far North, 528 drop out before class seven (Seignobos & Iyebi-Mandjek, 2000, p. 139). This situation is explained by the orientation of the majority of young people towards short-term, income-generating activities in the countryside, such as raising livestock. This is common among the female population. About 35.58% of girls completed a full cycle, against 65.68% for boys in 2008<sup>8</sup>. This phenomenon is not as great in the cities as in the countryside. The general rate of completion of a cycle in rural areas is estimated at 30.8%, while that in the cities is close to 55% (*ibid.*, p. 139). We note a correlation between the spatial map of cattle rearing, isolation and the high drop-out rate. In 2008, the regional delegation of basic education in the Far North reported a reduction of 11,380 students, certainly representing a low wastage rate (1.98%) but still numerically important<sup>9</sup>. Faced with the state's inability to respond effectively to the problems of the basic education sector, non-governmental organisations invest in education, in order to contribute their own share of solutions to this ever-increasing demand.

### **II- NGOs in the basic education sector**

The NGOs that invest in the basic education sector are of two types: national and international. Their areas of competence vary.

#### *National ngos*

For the most part, they are involved in the training, retraining, recruitment and support of teachers. In addition, these organisations are also interested in raising people's awareness and the support for the school enrolment of girls.

#### *Recruitment and training of teachers*

In order to fight against the shortage of teachers in basic education in

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<sup>8</sup> Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education *Report of school year 2008-2009*, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Regional Archives of the Far-North Delegation of Basic Education *Report of school year 2008-2009*, p. 24.

the region, national NGOs have set up the recruitment and training of teachers. The constraints of the crucial lack of teachers forced NGOs to recruit non-trained young graduates. The aim is to give them the basics of teaching and ethics in seminars organised for them. That is the case of RESAEC<sup>10</sup> which has been organising seminars for the teachers that it has recruited and placed at the disposal of the public and private establishments since 2007-2008. The modules taught in these seminars are linked specifically to an introduction to teaching and learning, lesson planning, communication and assessment techniques and management of the environment. Inspectors and regional vso<sup>11</sup> education volunteers accompany the RESAEC officials during seminars. From 53 volunteer teachers recruited in 2008-2009, it has grown to 101 teachers in 2010-2011.

### *Recycling*

Some national NGOs are particularly regular in the area of capacity-building of primary school teachers in the Far North. Among others, we have the RESAEC and Sana Logone that operate in this sector every year. Their capacity-building seminars aim at updating school curricula, training the teachers in new pedagogical approaches and including some para-pedagogical values such as the promotion of gender, decentralisation and the means to fight epidemics. Sana Logone intervenes specifically in strengthening teachers' capacities in the department of Mayo Danay. Its work is reinforced by primary school teachers' level of study, most of whom have the First School Leaving Certificate (CEP). In collaboration with the Mayo Danay divisional basic education delegation, Sana Logone has organised capacity-building seminars for teachers in order to enhance their pedagogical knowledge. In addition to retraining teachers, national NGOs boost their salaries for their daily survival.

### *Support*

In view of the high demand for primary school teachers, the state's inability to recruit and the inability of the Council and PTSA to pay teachers, NGOs provide their support by paying teachers' salaries. Thus, in the Yagoua government application school, two teachers were supported by Sana Logone in the 2010-2011 school year. The RESAEC supported two teachers in the Meskine group I government application school. The work of these development associations is not limited to schools. It also encompasses the population's awareness of the usefulness of schooling.

### *Awareness of populations*

The northern regions of the country have long been sceptical about western education. Long-favoured traditional education has encouraged the

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<sup>10</sup> Réseau des Animateurs pour l'Éducation des Communautés.

<sup>11</sup> Voluntary Service Overseas.

work of children on farms or in stock raising. Subsequently, boys are sent to western schools but the situation of girls has remained static. The belief that a daughter's place is at home has been working against the enrolment of girls. NGOs have set out to raise the people's awareness of the importance of school. This action must be encouraged by the restructuring and revitalisation of parents' associations, through which the awareness message will go over better. NGOs, in partnership with these associations, have conducted awareness campaigns on the importance of school and the schooling of girls. In the latter case, shining examples of women of the region who have taken on large responsibilities in the country are often used to out the message across. It was with the help of these NGOs that PTAs were able to draft plans for the development of their schools to enable them to cement and perpetuate actions.

#### *Support for the enrolment of girls*

The weight of tradition has long played in disfavour of the schooling of the young girl in Far North of Cameroon. The importance of school enrolment for girls has not always been viewed. To the benefit of many awareness campaigns carried out by the NGOs, some families agree to send their offspring to school. However, the problems of birth certificates are still serious, when the time comes to take sixth grade entrance exams and the primary studies certificate. Most of the students' parents are poor and illiterate, and it is often not easy to get the money for a birth certificate and the cost of files for the examinations. These barriers mark the end of the school career for girls who are directly oriented towards marriage. NGOs intervene to solve these cases by facilitating the issue of birth certificates and providing the fees for examinations. This is the case of the ALVF<sup>12</sup> which often helps girls in this situation. In the course of the 2010-2011 school year, 15 girls were assisted in Yagoua and were able to take the school exams. National NGOs are not the state's only partners in the field of basic education. They work in close collaboration with international NGOs.

#### *International NGOs in the education sector*

As mentioned earlier, international NGOs provide assistance (no less important) to the state in the training of youth. This aid is multifaceted and is available in technical input to the various national NGOs who operate in the education sector and especially in teaching and infrastructural resources. We will deal exclusively with this last aspect to avoid repetition.

#### *Support for teaching resources*

Almost all schools in the region suffer from a glaring lack of teaching materials. The physical appearance of rural schools often gives room for doubts on the quality of the education it provides. In a bid to bridge the gap

between the town and the village, Ident Africa, which is an NGO, distributes didactic materials to teachers of nine primary schools of the Bobogo I constituency. This didactic material mainly comprises books, illustration cards, boxes of chalk, school bags and exercise books for students. In its policy for the promotion of bilingualism in the Far North, vso offers summaries of English courses to teachers in the brochures. Teachers are thus equipped with the right tools to transmit knowledge to young learners. The most important contribution is the staffing of settlements in infrastructures.

#### *The infrastructure*

The problem of infrastructure is very acute in this region and the proof is the schools built in provisional materials. For 2011 out of 7,582 classrooms, 4,996 were in finite, 347 in semi-finite materials and 2250 in provisional materials. Basing on these statistics, approximately 30% of classrooms are in provisional materials. It includes the state's inability to create and build new schools. This figure denotes the urgency of intervention by other state partners in the education sector. The intervention of NGOs is visible at two levels: construction of new infrastructures and restoration of existing ones. The infrastructures include classrooms, offices, libraries, latrines and playgrounds. In this context, the NGO Plan Cameroon, in collaboration with the city councils of Mokolo, Mozogo, Koza, Maroua I, Bogo and Kaélé, has brought infrastructural support to schools requesting it. Thus, the plan is to build two blocks of four classrooms for each beneficiary of the project. Mokolo council has already received \$30 million from Plan Cameroon and Maroua I council six classrooms in addition to the reinforcement of teachers' capacities.

In the same perspective, ACRA<sup>13</sup> has built a building for the Ziling nursery school. This development association has also donated tables and benches and organised sessions of teachers' capacity reinforcement in the public schools of Moutourwa I and II. In collaboration with Sana Logone, ACRA has made an estimate count of 45 full-cycle schools to the year 2030 in the Mayo Danay division.

#### **IV- The scope of NGOs intervention**

The impact of the involvement of NGOs in the basic education sector in the Far North can be assessed if we take a number of settings into account. For this study, we chose a single parameter including the enrolment rate.

To better support our argument, we selected two schools at which NGOs are permanent. Before the NGOs' intervention they had a very dark profile in terms of school performance. It is particularly the case of public primary schools in Kongola Djiddeo and Mesquine II.

For all these schools, the staff barely reached 400 students before the NGOs' intervention. The two tables show the significant change in the number of students over six years or more.

**Table 1** Numbers at state schools in Kongola Djiddeo

School year	Boys	Percentage of boys	Girls	Percentage of girls	Total	Total percentage
2005-2006	270	54	229	46	499	100
2006-2007	315	59	221	41	536	100
2007-2008	389	60	259	40	648	100
2008-2009	383	57	283	43	666	100
2009-2010	470	61	295	39	765	100
2010-2011	439	56	341	44	780	100

Source: Data collected at the state school system in Kongola Djiddeo

This table shows a gradual increase in enrolment of students in the state school of Kongola Djiddeo from 2005 to 2011. With a turnover of 499 students in 2005, we arrived at 780 for the 2010-2011 school year, an increase of 56.31%. This situation is explained in part by the many awareness campaigns carried out by different national and international NGOs.

The boy/girl ratio gives us another angle for reading the numbers of females in this school. Despite the decline in 2006-2007, the number of girls changed noticeably from 229 in 2005-2006 to 341 in 2010-2011. The growth in the number of girls was approximately 48.9% during this period. Compared to the evolution of the number of boys at the same school during the same period, we find that the parents put in a great effort by sending more girls, since the growth in the number of boys was 61.5%. The situation in the Meskine II state school is almost the same, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Numbers at government schools in Meskine II

School year	Boys	Percentage of boys	Girls	Percentage of girls	Total	Total percentage
2003-2004	416	63	238	37	663	100
2004-2005	409	63	238	37	647	100
2005-2006	396	59	276	41	672	100
2006-2007	424	58	302	42	726	100
2007-2008	432	59	298	41	730	100
2008-2009	392	58	282	42	674	100
2009-2010	430	59	298	41	727	100
2010-2011	433	55	351	45	784	100

Source: Data collected at the government school of Meskine II

The numbers at the government school of Meskine II grew almost constantly except for two years in which they decreased (2004-2005 and 2008-2009). From 663 students in 2003-2004, they increased to 784 in 2010-2011, a rise of 18.25%.

As for girls, the number increased from 238 in 2003-2004 to 351 in 2010-2011, a growth rate of 47.47%. That of the boys for the same period

is 4.08%. We see that the enrolment rate of girls in this school was ten times higher than that of boys. This is also down to the success of the many awareness raising campaigns in favour of the enrolment of girls.

When comparing the two schools studied, we found that the numbers of students grew a lot more at Kongola than at Meskine, with 56.31% and 18.25% respectively. The rate of change in the number of girls at the two schools is much the same, with 48.9 per cent to 47.47 per cent in Kongola and Meskine. As for the numbers of boys at these two schools, in Meskine the rate was extremely low (4.08%) compared to that of Kongola which was 61.5%. On the basis of these statistics, we can conclude that the Kongola Djiddeo state school was much more receptive than Meskine.

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, it is easy to draw a profile of basic education in the Far North region of Cameroon. It suffers from inadequacy or lack of infrastructures and qualified teaching staff. This region is also characterised by a low enrolment rate especially of young girls under social pressures. This diagnosis promoted the involvement of NGOs in this sector, which is so crucial to the state. This takes the form of recruiting and strengthening the capacity of teachers and raising awareness of students' parents of the schooling of young people in general and girls in particular. This contribution, which is multidimensional, takes into account the infrastructural aspects in which the deployment of international NGOs is the most visible. The results of this intervention were visible soon after. The number of enrolments kept increasing, especially those of girls. However, beyond the intervention of these NGOs we see the state's bankruptcy and especially foreign interference in a sector of state sovereignty.

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