



# Voices In The Storm

*Agonies of the Displaced*

by

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# PART ONE

## **A Brief History of Cameroon Before 1884**

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive the coast of Cameroon, under the leadership of the Portuguese explorer called Fernadopo in 1472. They were the first Europeans to have arrived the Gulf of Guinea in 1471, before sailing to the coast of Cameroon in 1472. In that same year, 1472, Fernandopo visited River Wouri where he saw lots of prawns in the river, and named it “RIO DOS CAMEROES”, meaning the “River of Prawns”.

Meanwhile in that same year, 1472, the Spanish who arrived the Gulf of Guinea also explored River Wouri and named it Cameroes. The Dutch equally visited the territory in 1535 and established a trading post at the mouth of River Wouri. Due to the improvement in trade along the coast, the French, the British and the Germans also explored the coast of Cameroon and created their firms. Examples of such firms were the British firms of John Holt and Amba Bays company. The British named the territory Cameroons as they set up a court of equity in 1856 and the court of justice while the Germans named the territory Kamerun as they created their own

trading firms such as Carl Woermann, Jantzen and Thormahlen. The French who on their part explored the coast of Cameroon from Big Batanga, Campo, Malimba and Kribi as they signed treaties with the local Chiefs in order to encourage a legitimate relationship with them in the 1840s, named the territory Cameroun.

### **How the Germans Annexed Cameroon in 1884**

The British reluctant to annex Cameroon because of their decline in trade along the Coast encouraged German traders who were dominating trade along the coast, to mount pressure on their country government for the annexation of Cameroon.

Bismarck, who was the German Chancellor at that time accepted the request made by the traders and sent Dr. Nachtigal in the annexation process in which Nachtigal collaborated with the agents of the German firms in Cameroon through which secret meetings and night meetings were held between German traders and the local rulers as the Germans provided them with gifts and money to bribe the local rulers such as King Manga Bell and King Akwa to accept German annexation of Cameroon.

When that was done, the local chiefs prepared a memorandum which was called the Preliminary treaty to the Germans. And after the Germans had read the preliminary, some terms of the preliminary were included in the final treaty which was signed on the 12 of July 1884 as the Germano-Douala treaty with the hosting of the German flag in Cameroon to prove that Cameroon was annexed by the Germans.

## **The First World War in Cameroon**

The First World War broke out in Europe in 1914 due to the assassination of Arch Duke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austria-Hungary throne and his wife Sofia Cheteh in Bosnia. When the war broke out in Europe, the allied powers, Britain and France, decided to attack Germany in all her Colonies in Africa Cameroon included where the war was fought for a period of 18 months from August 1915 to February 1916 when the allied powers defeated the Germans in Cameroon.

### **Reasons Why the Allied Powers Extended the War to Cameroon**

The allied powers wanted to avenge the humiliating defeat Germany inflicted on France during the Franco Prussian war of 1870-1871, to seize the territory of Cameroon from the Germans and to control the strategic locations of Cameroon such as the Douala Naval base.

### **Reasons Why the Allied Powers Defeated the Germans in Cameroon**

The allied powers had good leadership. Under General Charles Dobell, the allied powers attacked Germany on all fronts. Besides, the allied powers had a larger number of soldiers as opposed to that of the Germans. They as well had the control of the Douala Naval base which prevented any supply of food and weapons on the side of the Germans.

## **Reasons Why the Territory was Partitioned into Two Between the British and the French in 1919**

Both Britain and France had different colonial policies and languages. Both powers wanted to have control over the strategic Naval bases of Douala, Victoria and Kribi. It was also partitioned in order to prevent the return of the Germans to Cameroon, and also to punish Germany for causing the war as well as to increase the French moral by giving her a large portion of Cameroon.

## **The Two Types of Colonial Rules Adopted in Cameroon by the French and the British**

After the portioning of Cameroon between France and Britain, they became the new colonial masters of the country. Britain used the Indirect Rule system of governance whereby information was passed on from the British colonial authorities in the territory to the local chiefs or traditional rulers to the indigenes. As such, the British were not in direct contact with the local people, rather, they acted from the background, giving orders to chiefs who then transmitted them to their local subjects. As such, the people in the part of Cameroon which was colonized by Britain had their cultures maintained and very little was affected by the British presence in their land.

On the other hand, France adopted the policy of Assimilation or Direct Rule System in her own portion of Cameroon. This Direct Rule System of governance was intended to make French men in Cameroon (that is say, convert Cameroonians into French men and women). They introduced the French culture, constructed schools, and built roads and churches.

The people in the part of Cameroon that was given to Britain were forced to learn the English Language which earned them the identity of Anglophones while those in the part given to France were forced to learn French and that earned them the identity of Francophones. Albeit all these changes in their communities, Cameroonians still battled to maintain their local languages. It should be noted that Cameroon has more than 240 tribes which are found in three main ethnic groups; Bantus, Semi-Bantus and Sudanese. The number of national languages spoken in the country is more than 240 as indicated by the number of tribes.

### **Why Britain Administered Cameroon as an Integral Part with Nigeria During the Mandate of 1922**

The British decided to administer Southern Cameroon as an integral part of Nigeria because the territory was too small in size and population. Secondly, they wanted to reduce cost of administration. It was also administered because the British did not have enough colonial officials who could have administered Southern Cameroon.

But later on in the 1950s, British Southern Cameroon boycotted from Nigeria politics because of the crisis in the Executive Regional house of Assembly at Enugu and the Executive house of Assembly in Lagos where they did not have enough representatives and therefore decided to demand for a separate house of assembly to be created in Southern Cameroon by the British. At this point in time, the United Nations Organization (U.N.O) was preparing to grant the independent of Nigeria in 1960 and French Cameroon and thought it wise to organise a plebiscite in Southern Cameroon to determine their future.

### **The Plebiscite in Southern Cameroon by the United Nations in 1961**

The UN decided to organise a plebiscite in Southern Cameroon, when the Mamfe plebiscite conference of 1959 had failed and as such, the UN came up with article 1352 of the UN plebiscite questions as it was read; “Do you wish to gain independence by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria or French Cameroon?” But the third option which was demanded by the traditional rulers for a complete secession from Nigeria and for Southern Cameroon to gain her independence was rolled out. It was on this note that, following the outcome of the plebiscite elections, Southern Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly to join their fellow brothers in French Cameroon.

### **The Foumban Constitutional Conference of July 17-21, 1961**

It was the coming together of two states i.e. West Cameroon and East Cameroon to form a Federal Constitution, and the name of the New state was called the Federal Republic of Cameroon which consisted of a President and a Vice President.

At Foumban, it was agreed that English and French languages were to become the official languages of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the placing of two stars in the flag to indicate the coming together of two states, as one. Both the English and the French sub-systems of education were to be maintained and in like manner, the two legal systems (French and English) were to be maintained in the Federal Republic.

But on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1972, President Ahidjo through a referendum abolished the Federal State for the creation of a United Republic of Cameroon. And in 1984, President Paul Biya amended

the constitution to change the name of the country from a United Republic to the Republic of Cameroon and eventually changed the two stars' flag into a one-star flag.

### **The Present Anglophone Crisis**

The present Anglophone crisis could be traced back right at the Foumban conference of 1961, which to the Southern Cameroonians, the terms were not respected. For example, the use of the two languages English and French does not have equal values. One language (French) is dominating another (English) in public places, the Southern Cameroon delegation of Foumban did not achieve the loose Federal system of Government as they wanted. Anglophones are not given the opportunities to hold key ministerial positions like the ministry of defense and finance. To them it was an open marginalization of the Anglophones by the Francophones. The change of name of the state of Cameroon from “The United Republic of Cameroon” to “The Republic of Cameroon” by President Paul Biya in 1984, the exploitation of the resources in Anglophone zones such as timber and petrol in Ndian without developing the Anglophone zones also triggered part of the crisis. All these explain why in 2016, when both the teachers and lawyers stood up to redress the domination of French language in the English sub system of education and the English system of common law which the layers felt was being dethroned by the French system of civil laws coupled with the use of French language in the Anglophone legal system respectively. These amongst other grievances, sparked off the socio-political crisis which started in 2026 in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Even before then, there have been uprisings here and there long before 2016 and these, such as the crisis which followed the presidential



elections in the early 90s have caused untold pain and loss of lives, property, dignity and livelihood.

## **Introduction**

All life has a base; we have aquatic life, land life, air life and all these adapt to their various environments for sustainability and longevity. Plant seeds for example sprout and take root either where they sprouted or where they are transplanted to after they give their first few true leaves. Once these plants take roots and start developing other parts and producing more roots, they soon get ready to flower and bear fruits and this phenomenon takes place over and over the years as long they remain rooted in the soil where they were planted. However, sometimes storms may come and overcome some of these trees and they get deracinated from the soil in which they had taken root and the result is often catastrophic. In some of such occasions, branches get broken, leaves get shredded like in a shredding machine, trunks crack and unripe fruits fall off and get wasted. Those that remain hanging on the wavering branches cling onto the last sap that they can still get from the branches, but sooner or later as the branches and the leaves wither, the unripe premature fruits swivel and dry off, fall off the branches and eventually decay. For aquatic life, they always need water for survival and once they are taken out of water, their life span becomes shortened and they soon die even if they thrive for a few minutes, hours, or days after they are washed ashore by some terrible raging stormy waves. They soon become wanting as the climatic conditions on land do not favour them. This also happens to birds which build their nests on trees and there they know that they are secure and with that confidence they lay their eggs, incubate and harsh their young and keep nurturing them there until they come to maturity. However, if the nests in which the birds live for some reason becomes destroyed, they go wondering as they have been rendered homeless. Sometimes the nests are ripped off the trees by wanton little children or hunters and the young birds die or their eggs are destroyed together with their home. I remember

that when I was growing up we had many such occasions on our farms when we came across bird nests and ransacked them for eggs. Often these nests contained very freshly hatched birds and that was the end of them for once a nest is destroyed, the mother bird won't come back to it. The young of the birds are exposed and eventually die. On those days, it was certain that the birds whose nests have been destroyed would have to go homeless for a number of days until they found a safe place where they could build their new nests and start life all over.

As farmers, we all know the horrors that meet some life that depend on the earth's crust for safety. The rat moles and crickets make their homes right in the ground and there they live peacefully and secured. When the rainy season comes and the farming season is around, the eggs which the crickets had initially laid hatch and the young start burrowing their holes in the ground. Sooner or later, they start causing havoc to farmers by eating up the young plants which have just started sprouting. In order to keep their crops, secure, farmers locate cricket holes and dig them up and catch the unlucky crickets but those that happen not to be in their holes certainly return to a completely devastated environment and have to start wandering from place to place. To uprooted from one's origins is a terrible and traumatizing experience that creates very deep and irreversible wounds in one's memory.

As illustrated with flora and fauna above, human beings too build their homes and take roots in certain specific locations where they plan their lives, cultivate their food, carry out their day to day activities and celebrate their accomplishments. However, storms of life, such as natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, landslides and wars do invade the human societies and cause indelible pain and anguish in their hearts. One of the most horrendous of such storms are wars which not only displace people, but claim lives, homes, property and render many

handicapped, orphaned, widowed, widowers, childless and lonely. Many are the woes that war brings to bear on humanity from time immemorial, yet human beings have not learnt from history and the histories of war keep repeating themselves. During wars, people who survive are displaced from their various homes, communities, villages, towns, as well as from their countries when it becomes imperative to flee further and beyond one's national territory. During such times, nothing else matter except the urge to keep breathing and stay alive. The urge for survival thus, becomes the uttermost need of humanity in times of wars.

This piece of work documents the experiences of the internally displaced persons in the North West region of Cameroon with an aim to cry out to the entire world to come together as one and stop wars all over the world. In the North West Region of Cameroon, the Anglophone crisis persists, it's been seven years now and the war goes on. It's like a little flickering fire which won't go off, yet the candle melts by almost unnoticed. Many have been displaced, thousands have died, countless have fled the country completely and many more are on the move. Villages are deserted and the horrors of a war situation set in. The schools, health facilities and many businesses are shut down due to the years-long crisis. Those who are internally displaced have gone through hell and are still doing so. While every family is bereaved, others have been rendered orphans, childless, widows, widowers and vulnerable. Some will never again see the four walls of a classroom. All of these groups of people have their stories to tell. Everyone living in this region has been traumatized by the crisis. Many of these victims have their stories buried within them. There is a need to document the stories of some of the (IDPs) for I believe that telling one's story is a way of healing. Telling these stories of the Internally Displaced Persons in the North West Region of Cameroon will be a way of giving a voice to the voiceless and an

eye opening cause to the international bodies who may step in and seek ways of addressing this crisis so that peace may return to this part of the country and the country at large.

Some people, including some of my family members have been displaced and they found themselves living in the bushes with wild beasts over several months with no food, no medical attention, no telephone network or any other things. So many homes got erased in fire in the cause of the war and so many have been rendered homeless. Many people have died out of starvation and lack of the least first aid medical care as the villages are shut down making access to the towns from the villages or from the towns to the villages very impossible. The inaccessibility of the villages has altered a lot of cultural traditions in our part of the country. Many people who escaped from the war and took shelter in some towns in the country face a lot of medical, economic and social challenges and just end up dying. When they die, their few family members who are in that same city have to buy spaces in cemeteries in the city in order to bury their deceased loved ones there since they cannot possibly carry the corpses to their villages and bury them there. In like manner, those in the cities are unable to access the villages and mourn with their loved ones when one of their family members happens to die in the village. Sometimes, someone will die and only three or four family members will be there to bury as it happened once in my family. The youths who usually dig graves have either been killed in the war or the few who survive have fled the village and so digging of graves becomes a huge burden on a few older persons and women who have braved the times to stay back in the villages. Some few years back, two of my family members died and there was no carpenter to make coffins for them so they were simply wrapped in some makeshift mats made out of bamboos and buried.

My own mother survived by the grace of God when soldiers went burning homes and firing and the rest of her relations who had gathered in our family compound for safety escaped to the bushes for safety. Being a patient, my mum could not run with the rest of the people so she just went inside her room and locked the door and chance was on her side since that particular house was not set on fire. Those who were cooking at that moment took the pots of food with them to their hiding places and my mum stayed locked up alone for days without food until there was some calm in the village and the rest of the family members returned one after another. They merely survived on the little that they had before the Crisis intensified. Basic necessities like salt, cooking oil, kerosene for lamps, and other food items like rice that they could purchase from the stores became scarce. So many of my people simply died and continue to die out of want and suffering and so is the case in many villages and families. There has not been any respite since the war broke out.

There are so many such terrifying stories in this part of the country and some that will of course never be told. The following part of the work is a recapitulation of what is happening in my part of the country. The stories are told by women, men and younger persons who have gone through traumatic experiences of the war. Many of them have become widows, others orphans, some jobless, some school drop-outs awhile others live simply from hand to mouth and their living conditions are deplorable. Their lives are just adrift and the future is bleak. Below is a poem which tries to recapitulate the situation in the two English Speaking Regions of the country.

### ***The Wanderer in His Own Land***

*Face beaten by misery,*

*Joy sapped by pain as deep as the ocean,*

*Hearts cracked like dykes in the desert,*

*They wander, day and night,*

*The sounds of gunshots*

*Far back at home,*

*Home sweet home now invaded by terror,*

*Are the long echoes they keep,*

*Homes yield to the raging flames set by enraged armed men,*

*'How many did we burry last week?'*

*The lonely man seeks consolation from his shadow.*

*"Was it my home that went aflame the other day?'*

*He counts time with his fingers,*

*The world is moving on its head,*

*He seems to feel.*

*He hears a million voices of screaming children and comrades in his head,*

*The path is winding into the thick forest*

*Where he hopes to befriend a tree for shelter*

*Only if its coily occupants will let him be.*

*He prays;*

*'Lord let there be sunshine on the other side,*

*Let there be day after this long night,*

*Let morning come oh Lord,*

*Let me wake from this horror of a dream."*

*He hugs the trees for comfort,*

*At least, the trees are there for him,*

*Human beings have...and failed him!*

*(Geraldine Sinyuy, June 23, 2023)*



## **Victorine's Story**

Victorine is a hair dresser in the war torn city of Bamenda in the North West Region of Cameroon. She is a single mother of three daughters, 3, 7 and 15 years old. It is a hot and dusty dry season afternoon. The saloon is a rickety-box-like cubicle roughly constructed at one corner of an old commercial building along one of the streets in the city. When I walk in to her saloon, her youngest baby is sleeping on some pieces of cloth placed on a scarlet sofa. Victorine is sitting by her daughter, and there is no other person in the saloon. From every indication, she has been sitting idle since morning because there are no customers. There is an empty old shelf on one wall of the salon with very old containers of cheap shampoo, a Bible with many papers stuffed in-between several pages, some few combs and a five litres container of water. The floor in the saloon appears to have been roughened by age while the paint on the walls is already flaking at some points. One can tell from first sight that this is a makeshift salon.

Victorine smiles immediately she sees me. At least she will have one client for the day.

**Victorine:** Good afternoon Madam. (She says to me while smiling broadly.)

**Interviewer:** Hello Vicky. How are you doing today?"

**Victorine:** Not quite fine. I'm just bored here. There is no work. I am an orphan from a polygamous family. My father had many wives. I have an only brother from the same mother but I do not know where he is. When our parents died, I was five years old while my elder brother was seven years old. My brother and I separated when we were very young. I dropped out of school from the moment my parents died. My elder brother never saw the four walls of a classroom.

When I was 18 years old, my step-brother showed kindness to me by enrolling me for apprenticeship to learn hair dressing. Three months after I started learning, my step brother died and there was no one else to sponsor me

Before the Crisis Started I was located in one part of this town. I finished my apprenticeship in hair dressing. After my apprenticeship I started my own business and set up a small store where I was selling things, however, the business did not thrive. When the crisis began, the store was burnt down along so many other shops that were burnt and I lost everything. I had to start from scratch. I thought that getting a boyfriend would solve my problem, but eventually when I got engaged with one man and had a baby he abandoned me. I had to single handedly bring up the child. After that, I still met another man who promised to marry me, but the same thing happened. We have two daughters, but as we are speaking, the man has already abandoned me because the he can no longer provide for me and the children.

**Interviewer:** Is it because of the crisis that the man abandoned you?

**Victorine:** Yes, I can say to a certain extent as he too lost his job and no longer had a source of income. These relationships have been a blow on my face as I never knew that a man can be unfaithful to a woman. I knew that once in love, one stayed in love. I do not know how to cheat on someone, especially a partner.

**Interviewer:** I understand how painful it can be.

**Victorine:** It is really painful. When I got pregnant for this my third baby in the heart of the crisis, all my friends deserted me, but for one who stood by me in the hospital and paid my hospital bill. I am thankful for her.

**Interviewer:** That's a true friend. You owe her your friendship as well.

**Victorine:** Yes, she is a good person.

**Interviewer:** Are your children in school?

**Victorine:** Yes, my first two daughters are schooling.

**Interviewer:** Who sponsors them in school?

**Victorine:** I pay their school fees from my little earnings from the saloon.

**Interviewer:** What level of education did you attend?

**Victorine:** I dropped out in primary school.

**Interviewer:** If you had a chance to go to school would you like to study?

**Victorine:** Yes, I would gladly go to school.

**Interviewer:** Alright. I am going to help you so that you can register as an external candidate for the First School Leaving Certificate Examination for the 2022/2023 academic year. Since your daughter is in primary four, she can help you to read and solve simple Mathematics. You can make it.

**Victorine:** Thank you very much for that offer. I will be very happy to go back to school.

**Interviewer:** You're welcome. Education is the only key to change. After your First School leaving Certificate you can enroll in an evening school and study for your Ordinary Level General Certificate of Education.

**Victorine:** Thank you very much. Thank you for offering to help me.

**Interviewer:** On Tuesday next week I'll take you to the inspectorate of basic education and pay your registration fees. You will come along with you're a photocopy of your Birth Certificate and National Identity Card.

**Victorine:** Thank you very much.

**Interviewer:** You're welcome. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. I pray that change will come your way and that you will have a better future.

## **Lovert's Story**

**Lovert:** When the crisis started I was still a second year university student. I could not even complete that second year due to the crisis. We had to even escape from our homes. We were living in bushes and at times one would even leave her place and go a place that he or she did not even know whether his or her night there would be successful. I was completely destabilized and unfocused.

**Interviewer:** What were you studying at the university before the crisis started?

**Lovert:** I was studying Secretariat Studies in the university. But because of the war I dropped out of school.

**Interviewer:** When life in the village became too difficult what did you?

**Lovert:** I had nothing to do at that time because there was no means for me to further my education wherever schools were operating in some parts of the country that were not affected by the war. Consequently, I had to enroll myself in some petit businesses in order to earn a little money that could sustain me for a while. I started doing gardening. I farmed our famous huckleberry which almost everyone consumes in the entire country. I used to harvest the vegetables and sell and that is what took me to Bamenda. I had a specific person who used to get my vegetables and retail in Bamenda. After two years, that particular person invited me to come and be doing the gardening instead in Bamenda so that she would have a quick access to my farm produce. I accepted that offer and then moved from my village to Bamenda and since that time I have not returned to my village since the war is still going on.

**Interviewer:** So, you farmed the vegetables here in Bamenda.

**Lovert:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Were you offered free land for the gardening or did you have to rent it?

**Lovert:** We rented the land on which we did the gardening and then bought manure to enrich the soil with.

**Interviewer:** Where were living when you came to Bamenda in order to continue your gardening of huckleberry?

**Lovert:** I was living with my aunt who had been in Bamenda long before the crisis started.

**Interviewer:** What does she do for a living?

**Lovert:** She sells palm wine in one small make shift kiosk in one of the neighbourhoods here in Bamenda.

**Interviewer:** Was your huckleberry gardening in Bamenda successful?

**Lovert:** Yes, it was very successful to an extent that I was able to help my sibling who were back in the village since I came to Bamenda alone. I used the money which I got as profit from my huckleberry gardening to bring my younger ones to Bamenda town. They came and met me here and they are schooling till date.

**Interviewer:** How is their condition? Do they have all their needs? Are you able to provide for them all their needs since they came to Bamenda under your invitation?

**Lovert:** I give them whatever I have and leave the rest to God. I cannot offer what I do not have.

**Interviewer:** No tell me, what are your future plans? How has the crisis affected your future?

You said you were initially a student, but I see that you are pregnant. Are you married? How did

you get married? Are you married to somebody from your village and how did the marriage come about? Was it your initial purpose in life?

**Lovert:** No it wasn't my intention to get married at that time. When I came to Bamenda things were too tough and I needed support. So, as I found this man, he supported me and we went to the extent of being together. Till today I still have the hopes that I will go back to school one day and have my certificates. Before the crisis started, we had already gone on internship, preparing to write our HND. I have not completely given up on education because I a passion for it. I still hope to go back to school and obtain my certificates when I have the opportunity to do so.

**Interviewer:** How many children do you have now?

**Lovert:** I have two kids and as you can, I'm expecting the third one.

**Interviewer:** Are you legally married?

**Lovert:** No, I am not legally married. I am just living with this man though I call him my husband, but I will like to be legally married to him if I had the opportunity to do so.

**Interviewer:** What about your parents? You have been displaced. Are they back at home? How are their living conditions?

**Lovert:** My parents are back in my village. They continue facing the daily challenges of the war. Sometimes they escape to the bushes when the tension rises in the quarters and return to our family compound when it dies down. They are there with some of my siblings

**Interviewer:** Do you have a comfortable home where you live now? Do you have water, electricity and other facilities that everyone needs on daily basis? Do you live in a home of your own?

**Lovert:** No I am renting a house. We are renting a small single room and parlour which all of us share. We are not comfortable at all. We do not have water. Water scarcity is a big problem that we are facing in our neighbourhood. We have to go very far distances in order to get water.

**Interviewer:** Do you live alone with your husband or do you have other persons living with you in the same house?

**Lovert:** My house is crowded. I have other Internally Displaced Persons living with me. I have both my relatives and my husband's relatives living with me. Imagine several people sharing a single tiny room. From every indication, my husband and I do not have any privacy as we share the same space with the rest of the family members who are living with us. Sometimes it gets worst when we have visitors who have to spend a night or more with us.

**Interviewer:** How many of you are in the house?

**Lovert:** We are seven.

**Interviewer:** I understand you just depend on odd jobs to make ends meet, how do you manage feeding? How many times do you eat per day?

**Lovert:** We eat twice.

**Interviewer:** thank you very much for sharing your story with us. I pray that life will be better for you tomorrow and that you will have the means to go back to school.



## **Alvine's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon Alvine. As we earlier agreed on, I'm going to be interviewing you on your experiences as far as the Anglophone Crisis is concerned. We are all aware that many people have been displaced by the war and you are one of them. Can you please tell us your story? How has it been in the village and how did you find yourself here in Bamenda?

**Alvine:** It wasn't easy. Life became so hard. There in the in the village, that is in Bui Division, the gun shots were unbearable. At one moment you'll just get a phone call saying: "They're coming" and you don't know who is coming, the soldiers or the separatist fighters. Once that message came, by the time you took one step, firings would begin everywhere shortly after. Usually when such information reached us, it was a warning for us to run for our lives. It reached an extent when one day they said "they are coming"; I had my luck that fateful day. I was about to leave the house after getting the information that "they" were coming. As I stepped out the house, I was almost killed at the door but thanks to my grandmother's intervention, it didn't happen. She said that all the occupants of the house were little children and the armed soldier ordered all of us to come out. We all came out of the house, he went into the house and searched everywhere. He then came outside and asked us to go and show him where the separatist fighters were but we knew nothing about the separatist fighters. When he could not get any information from us, he walked away and left us panicking in the yard.

From there life became harder and that year I was supposed to write my Advance Level Technical General Certificate of Education Examination. I did not succeed in writing my exams because schools were shut down due to the crisis. That is how I dropped out of school till date.

Everything fell apart for me. I eventually found myself here in Bamenda. I can say that I just went into forced marriage because I had no means. Imagine getting married to someone you don't even know just because you want to save your life.

**Interviewer:** Where did you know the man? Was it in your village or was it when you escaped to Bamenda?

**Alvine:** I knew the man just through a phone call. One of our neighbours who was living in Bamenda called me one day and told me that there was one of her neighbours in Bamenda who was looking for a lady to get married to. When I heard about this man, I considered all the dangers I was facing in the village, the gun shots, the nights we spent in the bush whereby a snake could even bite someone, the running from one quarter of the village to another in order to stay safe and the psychological trauma which all of that entailed, I decided to take bull by horns. I yielded to the lady's suggestion since she kept insisting that I should come to Bamenda and meet this man. From my understanding of things, I knew that when I come and meet the man, we would go back to my village and see my family so that the marriage rites could be performed. However, when I eventually met the man, I moved in with him but it wasn't easy. Things became so tough that sometimes when I talked to him he didn't want to respond. In fact he didn't want to anything. He got angry all the time.

**Interviewer:** Does it mean that you went straight to the man's house the same day you arrived in Bamenda?

**Alvine:** Yes, I went straight to his house. I had no other place where I could go to and stay for some days before going to the man's house.

**Interviewer:** That must have been a difficult thing to do.

**Alvine:** Yes it was. From there the man started maltreating me. Whenever he went out to drink with his friends and had any disagreements, he would come back and transfer the aggression on me. Things got tougher and tougher as days went by and from there I was forced to look for a job. I started looking for people who needed labour on their farms and told them that I do the farm work so that they could pay me. That is how I started raising some little money that I could help myself with. I used the little money that I got from the farm labour that I did on people's farms and started a small business in the house. However, the young man did not like it. Later on I got pregnant for him and gave birth to baby girl.

**Interviewer:** Oh, you had a baby with him.

**Alvine:** Yes, I have a child with him.

**Interviewer:** How old is the child?

**Alvine:** She is two years old. He did not take responsibility over the child and that was just like an additional responsibility on me because I had myself to take care of before the child. He himself became a burden to me since I equally had to take care of him. It was beyond my capacity. All of these were not in my initial intensions. My intension before the crisis hit in was to have my Advance Level GCE and further my education, but the crisis just frustrated me.

**Interviewer:** So, what were you planning to become in the future if there were no crises, if you had gone to school normally, what would you do?

**Alvine:** Since I studied Home Economic (Food Science) I could either become a nutritionist or open a baking center or I could equally train as a nurse. But it as if my all my dreams have been shattered by the crisis. This crisis has really affected me a lot but I thank God I am alive.

**Interviewer:** Now, have you made any legal marriage rites with the man? Are you legally married to him? Have you signed any legal documents with him?

**Alvine:** I haven't made any marriage rites nor signed any legal documents with him.

**Interviewer:** Are you still with him?

**Alvine:** I am no longer with him since it is just like "Come We Stay"<sup>1</sup>. We had to separate.

**Interviewer:** Who is taking care of the baby?

**Alvine:** For now, the baby is with the father. Since we had to separate and he was somehow fighting me with the child, I just told myself that the child will grow up and if I am still alive, she will look for me the as the mother. He actually refused to give the child to me.

**Interviewer:** He took the child!

**Alvine:** He took the child and refused to give her back to me. Because he refused to give the child back to me, I thought of going to Social Welfare but on a second thought I dropped that action. I told myself that since he is the father of the child and is willing to take care of the child and since his mother and sisters are living with him, I just let him have the child.

**Interviewer:** And you had no legal documents to show that you are married to him, so can you proceed with legal affairs when you have no valid documents?

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<sup>1</sup> A local appellation for cohabitation. When a man and a woman move in to live together without having done any marriage rites either traditionally or legally, it is called "Come we stay" which can be translated directly into English as "Come and Let's Stay Together".

**Alvine:** Yes. I had nothing.

**Interviewer:** So, what are you doing now? You're on your own. How are you surviving? Are you renting or are you begging for a home?

**Alvine:** For now I am renting as a single mother. I live in a single room. I am doing some small business in order to keep myself up so that I can have a better tomorrow so that my dreams should not be shattered.

**Interviewer:** Ok. What about your parents?

**Alvine:** My parents? They are of late.

**Interviewer:** Did they die in the crisis or before the crisis?

**Alvine:** My mum died before the crisis. That was in 2014.

**Interviewer:** Two years before the crisis.

**Alvine:** Yes, two years before the crisis started.

**Interviewer:** Do you have siblings?

**Alvine:** Yes I have siblings.

**Interviewer:** Where are they?

**Alvine:** One of them stays in Bambili here in Bamenda. One is in Yaoundé and the other one is with my aunt in the village. I am their elder sister.

**Interviewer:** Are you supporting them with your little income?

**Alvine:** Not really. I just give them the little I have.

**Interviewer:** Are they going to school or have they also dropped out of school?

**Alvine:** The one in the village stayed at home for several years until last year when a community school started operating in the village. The other two who are in Bambili and Yaoundé are also schooling. I had to drop out of school since I had no means to continue schooling on my own in order to obtain my Advance Level Certificate.

**Interviewer:** Alvine thank you so much for sharing your story. It's a sad story, we all share in your story. It's a sad story and everyone is being affected in one way or the other and we pray that the international body will help and that humanity will be human. Thank you so much Alvine.

## **Ophelia's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Ophelia, good afternoon. All of us are almost inter the Anglophone Crisis has been rocking the foundations of the Speaking regions of the country for a long time now and this has had adverse effects on the people of those localities. You have also been a victim of the crisis. Can you please share your story with us?

**Ophelia:** The experience has not been a good one at all. It has been tough and tedious at the same time. As far as being displaced is concerned, I have been displacing from Bansa to Bamenda and finally I had to get married even when I did not intend to. It was due to the crisis and because I needed to survive and I needed to push life ahead and despite the fact that it was not my wish I had to do it in order to survive as things were getting pretty difficult. I had to get into marriage alongside managing a petit business which is not moving alt all due to lack of finances and lack of capital to finance the business to grow successfully. So putting on a petit business and taking care of the family is not easy because it is not a day's job. By going in and out of the house, trying to see if one can survive is not easy. I'm trying to see if can meet up with the demands here and the task ahead of me and if I can be able to push forth the way things are moving. I have been displaced for more than five years now and being alone I had no one to cry to, I had to survive on my own and I had to move from one place to another trying to see if I could have a job but nothing works. Nonetheless, I am grateful and thankful to god Almighty for the position and the level in which I am now.

**Interviewer:** Yes, you have to be thankful that you survived.

**Ophelia:** Yes, I am thankful to God that I survived and I wish that I could also tell others who have survived like me that they could also push ahead and that if I can stand the situation today, they too can stand it. If others have survived, why not them. All they need to do is trust God and he will surely make a way for them.

**Interviewer:** Ok, looking back at your live and then seeing what you are today, what are those opportunities that you have lost as someone who was rightfully supposed to be in her home around her own people. In her own place, culturally, psychologically, economically and academically?

**Ophelia:** I have lost a lot of opportunities. I equally lost a job and I have equally lost a child.

**Interviewer:** How old was the child?

**Ophelia:** Five months.

**Interviewer:** What happened? I'm sorry that I am touching back the wounds that are already healing. I am sorry, but sharing it will help somebody.

**Ophelia:** It has not been easy. I was pregnant and I equally had to move from place to place looking for jobs in order to have little money with which to buy the basic things that I needed. It was too tedious an exercise and brought a lot of stress to bear on me. I was both physically and psychologically traumatized The tress was too much and finally I could not make it with the pregnancy.

**Interviewer:** I guess that you were not eating enough as well.

**Ophelia:** Yes, I was not eating enough and that's how it ended.



**Interviewer:** I am so sorry to hear that you had to go through this. Were you with this same husband when you lost the pregnancy? Is it the same man that you said you were forced to get married to out of your will since it wasn't initially your intention to get married?

**Ophelia:** Yes, I was pregnant for him.

**Interviewer:** Ophelia I am sorry to hear that you had to go through all this. We are all affected by crisis and we actually pray as you said, that God should give us the strength to keep trusting him so that tomorrow there will be a better life.

**Interviewer:** Now, do you have brothers and sisters? If, so, what about them? What has become of them?

**Ophelia:** I do have siblings and they are displaced as well. They're scattered and are trying to survive in this life on own. They're in different places battling with life to see if they can cope and survive and to be in the positions where they were before the crisis began.

**Interviewer:** Now you said you had to get married against your will. You had plans, hopes and aspirations for your future. What did you want to become if this war had come and dislocated and disrupted your plans for life?

**Ophelia:** Well I wanted to become an accountant since I studied Accounting.

**Interviewer:** To what level did you study?

**Ophelia:** Right up to the first degree.

**Interviewer:** And now the crisis came and you could no longer continue with your education.

**Ophelia:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** I'm so sorry about this. You see, war can really kill dreams.

**Ophelia:** Yes, it does.

**Interviewer:** What about your living conditions? How is the housing? How many people are living with you? Are there some other people from your family or your husband's family living with you or is it just you, your husband and your baby?

**Ophelia:** Well, we live with some of my husband's relatives. We are just managing a two-rooms house.

**Interviewer:** Are those your husband's relations also internally displaced persons?

**Ophelia:** Yes, they are internally displaced persons.

**Interviewer:** Are they adolescents or are they older?

**Ophelia:** They are adolescents.

**Interviewer:** And you have to share the tiny two rooms with them in order to survive.

**Ophelia:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** Ophelia, thank you for sharing your story with us. We hope that the world will do something so change can come to the society. War is a crime against human rights.

## **Marwatu's Story.**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon Marwatu. You are one of the internally displaced persons. You are here in Bamenda but this is not your home town. How did you find yourself here? What happened?

**Marwatu:** Good afternoon Dr. Geraldine. About the crisis, it has affected us terribly. We left our village and came here in Bamenda. It's very difficult for us here. From feeding to schooling, house rents and everything else. Life is tough.

**Interviewer:** So, could you go back a little bit, that is, have a rewind of what happened? How did you leave your home in the village? Did you have a house of your own back in the village?

**Marwatu:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, how did you leave? Under what circumstances?

**Marwatu:** It was due to the crisis. There were gun shots everywhere, so we had to leave the village because we could no longer bear it.

**Interviewer:** With whom did you leave the village?

**Marwatu:** I left with my children

**Interviewer:** Are you married?

**Marwatu:** Yes, I am a married woman.

**Interviewer:** What about your husband? You said you left the village with your children.

**Marwatu:** My husband is with me.

**Interviewer:** So you left the village together and abandoned everything you had?

**Marwatu:** Yes, we left together. We left everything that we had behind.

**Interviewer:** How did you find a house here? What happened when you got to Bamenda?

**Marwatu:** When we got to Bamenda we had to stay with one of our aunts just for a few days because there were too many of us and we could not stay with her. As a result, we had to look for a place of our own and be managing there, but it's not going. Things are very tough, life is hard.

**Interviewer:** What were you doing in the village before the war broke out? For example, something like a business to earn a living. What were your economic activities?

**Marwatu:** We were doing farming.

**Interviewer:** Now, when you came to Bamenda, did you have farms again?

**Marwatu:** No, we don't have any farm here in Bamenda.

**Interviewer:** So, how do you manage economically?

**Marwatu:** Hmmmm, now we are looking for odd jobs. Anything we can see, we do in order to get little money to keep us going. Actually we do not have a specific thing that we are doing now.

**Interviewer:** From what I understand, you get up every morning and go job-hunting, don't you?

**Marwatu:** I have kept my applications everywhere so if I get up in the morning and my services are needed anywhere I go and do the work if it is something I can be able to do.

**Interviewer:** What about your children? Did they stay out of school?

**Marwatu:** No they are going to school.

**Interviewer:** They are going to school.

**Marwatu:** Yes, but some of them are staying at home. They have dropped out of school.

**Interviewer:** What are your plans for the future? What do you think you're going to do in order to sponsor your children? How do you see the future? Do you think your children are going to make it?

**Marwatu:** By the grace of God they will make it.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing your story with us and we pray that the crisis will come to an end because war is really destructive to human lives.

## **Fadimatu's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon Fadimatu.

**Fadimatu:** Good afternoon.

**Interviewer:** As we earlier agreed, you're going to be sharing your story as an internally displaced person due to the Anglophone Crisis. You are here in Bamenda and it is not your hometown. Can you tell us the circumstances that led to your coming here? How was it like back in your village?

**Fadimatu:** The situation became bad as there were gun shots, violence and tension and people were forced to escape from their homes to the bushes for security. They spent nights upon nights in the bushes and when the tension and the shootings abated, they then returned to their homes and each time the shootings started, they had to run again to the bushes for refuge. Some of the people who had farm huts were lucky but majority of the people had nowhere to run to and could only stay under trees in the forest whether it was raining or not. All they needed to was to stay safe at all cost.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a farm hut?

**Fadimatu:** No, my family and I did not have a farm hut. Our home was found only in the town where we had constructed our family house. We were in the head quarter of the village.

**Interviewer:** So, where did you run to when the rest of the people in your community were escaping to the bushes?

**Fadimatu:** We all ran together with them. I was living in that house with my husband and children and we all used to run to the bush together whenever there was danger. Sometimes we

used to beg and stay in the farm huts of some neighbours, but it was not still easy for there were many occasions when before we could settle in in one of the huts, news came that the place was no longer safe and we had to relocate to another area in the bush. The experience was too traumatizing.

**Interviewer:** Was there room I the farm huts?

**Fadimatu:** There was never room. The farm huts in the first place are just traditional shelters which many people whose farms are farm away from their homes used to construct with sticks so that they could hide from the harsh weather conditions like rain and sun while they farmed there. As such, they never made the huts large since they were just meant for that purpose and not for continual habitation.

**Interviewer:** How was life in the huts for those days you had to stay in the bushes?

**Fadimatu:** It was terrible. Sometimes more than seventy people including men, women, children and babies were crammed in one hut. It wasn't something that anyone would pray for, but we had no choice.

**Interviewer:** Over seventy people in one hut? It must have been terrible! I'm sorry that you had to go through that.

**Fadimatu:** Yes. Over seventy people. All we needed was to survive. Some people had brought their mattresses along and they spread them on the floor. Those of us who did not have any mattresses lay on leaves and loin clothes floor.

**Interviewer:** From what you just said, does it mean that some people took mattresses from their homes while escaping to the bushes?

**Fadimatu:** Yes, since it had become a routine some people were alert and prepared, but some who escaped with nothing just slept on the bare floor.

**Interviewer:** What about food? What did you eat when you spent those weeks and months in the bush?

**Fadimatu:** Each time we were running, we carried the little food that we could and ran along with it. That is what kept us going in during those weeks in the bush and when it finished we had to bear the hunger until we had a chance to return to our homes again. We used to take along either garri or our corn flour. In moments when we were ill-prepared, we escaped with no food item and in those moments, we stayed hungry.

**Interviewer:** Ooh!

**Fadimatu:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What about water? Where did you get water from when you were compelled to stay in the bush for weeks?

**Fadimatu:** As for water, we used to go and fetch from the streams around the farms.

**Interviewer:** Of all the people that used to run to take refuge were there babies and pregnant women?

**Fadimatu:** Everybody, including babies and pregnant women were obliged to escape to the bushes if they wanted to survive and stay alive.

**Interviewer:** What about personal hygiene? Did you have an opportunity to bath while in the bush?



**Fadimatu:** No, that wasn't possible. One could only bath if he or she sneaked back to the community settlement to take one or two items from the house, but that was often risky. Apart from that, we stayed without bathing for as long as we stayed in the bush. However, at one moment, it was no longer possible for one to return to the settlement area again and everything was abandoned.

**Interviewer:** How long did you stay in the bush each time you had to run for your lives?

**Fadimatu:** Sometimes we stayed in the bush for one month or more.

**Interviewer:** That must have been hard.

**Fadimatu:** Yes, it was very hard. It wasn't easy.

**Interviewer:** When did you take the final decision to leave the village completely?

**Fadimatu:** As the situation was deteriorating day after day, we thought that staying in those conditions in the bush was going to affect both our health and that of our children and so my husband I decided to leave for Bamenda. However, the last straw that broke the camel's back was the incident when seven people were killed in our neighbourhood. The seven corpses were such a terrifying sight that we could not stand. We just had to leave.

**Interviewer:** How did you cope when you first came to Bamenda? Where did you live?

**Fadimatu:** My husband had left the village a few months before the children and I followed. We have three children. My husband found a single room in one ghetto and we all fitted into that single room. We stayed in that single room, sharing an external pit toilet with above fifteen other tenants who are equally mostly displaced persons, for five months and then relocated to a two-room house in the same neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** How is the environment where you live now?

**Fadimatu:** It is an overcrowded environment with too many tenants.

**Interviewer:** Does that mean you have no privacy?

**Fadimatu:** Yes. We have no privacy. The compound is overcrowded and we all share a single external toilet. We queue up to either bath or to use the toilet. It's not easy at all.

**Interviewer:** That means if you are going somewhere you may have to go late or if you have some malaise like some urge to relief yourself in the case of diarrhea you may run into trouble.

**Fadimatu:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** What were you doing in the village before the war broke out?

**Fadimatu:** I was a farmer.

**Interviewer:** What are doing now?

**Fadimatu:** I don't have a specific job. I do odd jobs and that's how I get the little money that my family and I can manage on. Sometimes I buy corn, boil it and then carry on my head and move about the city to sell.

**Interviewer:** What about your husband?

**Fadimatu:** He too does odd jobs in order to get some little money for the family. From what we get, we pay the house rents, buy food and get medications when one of us happens to be sick.

**Interviewer:** What about your house in the village?

**Fadimatu:** The house stands there in the overgrown bush, but most houses there have been burnt down in the course of the crisis and many more are still being burnt down.

**Interviewer:** What can you say about war?

**Fadimatu:** What I can say is that we should pray for the war to come to an end so that people like us who have been displaced can go back to their homes and that the killings too should come to an end. If war is ended and people are alive, no matter how poor they are, they will live be alive and each one will die only when God had ordained that he or she would die.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much Fadimatu for sharing your story with us. We join hands together to pray for the war to come to an end and for all wars in the world to cease.

**Fadimatu:** You're welcome.

## **Veronica's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good evening Vero. Please can you tell us your story? How has the crisis affected you? What have been your experiences? How did you find yourself here? How was it back at home?

**Veronica:** The crisis has affected me because I am not in my village. I had to stop schooling due to the crisis and now I can no longer do the things that I used to do before.

**Interviewer:** How was it? Can you describe the circumstances that led to your having to quite your village?

**Veronica:** It was due to the continuous gunshots and the killings. Each time we got up in the morning and heard that somebody has been killed and that really made me to be afraid and the only option I had was to leave the village to a place where I could be safe.

**Interviewer:** Alright. Did you just got up in the morning and saw corpses or did you just received information that people have been killed?

**Veronica:** I saw them. Sometimes the gunshots went on throughout the entire night and in the morning people just stayed at home watching and soon one or two persons will pass by and tell us that people have been killed. People were also killed during the day. At times one would go to the market and would not be able to sell or buy anything due to the instability and the lurking danger. One ran to and fro the market.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any business at the market or did you used to go there just to buy your food stuff?

**Veronica:** Sometimes I used to sell some things in the market but that was not permanent.

**Interviewer:** Okay. I learned that some of the people used to escape and spend nights in the bushes for safety. Did such a thing ever happen to you and your family?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe one of the incidences?

**Veronica:** It was very scary and difficult because one had to sleep in a place that is not one's home and one never knew what would happen next and so I used to be very scared. At times one didn't even have what to eat.

**Interviewer:** So did you have to look for houses in other areas where it was safer to stay there?

**Veronica:** Where we were, there were no safe houses so we had to go to the bush.

**Interviewer:** Were there moments that you had to stay in the bush during the rainy season?

**Veronica:** Yes, there were and it rained on us.

**Interviewer:** Were there children in your family, little children younger than yourself?

**Veronica:** Yes, there were little children in my family.

**Interviewer:** How long did you stay in the village after the war began before coming to Bamenda? The crisis started in 2016, in which year did you come to Bamenda?

**Veronica:** I came here in 2017, but I went back again in 2018 and then returned to Bamemda again in 2019.

**Interviewer:** Alright. All along during that time, were you schooling?

**Veronica:** In 2017 I was in form five. I went even went to write the GCE and there was no way.

**Interviewer:** So you actually went to write your final examination at the examination centre.

**Veronica:** Yes, I did but there were a lot of gunshots and we could not continue.

**Interviewer:** Does it mean you and the rest of the candidates just scattered due to the gunshots and the examination session ended and that was all about you?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Since then have you been to school?

**Veronica:** No. I haven't been back to school again. Instead I am trying to learn some trade.

**Interviewer:** What trade are you learning?

**Veronica:** Tailoring.

**Interviewer:** Tailoring? How is it going?

**Veronica:** I'm managing.

**Interviewer:** Managing. Who's sponsoring you for the tailoring apprenticeship?

**Veronica:** My sister.

**Interviewer:** Your elder sister?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Now that you left the village, where are your parents?

**Veronica:** My parents are in the village.

**Interviewer:** Now tell us, what were your aspirations when you were going to school? What were you planning to become?

**Veronica:** I was planning to become a teacher.

**Interviewer:** But now your plans have been dashed.

**Veronica:** You said you are learning tailoring and your sister is your sponsor. Are you equally living with her?

**Veronica:** I am not living with my sister. Due to the crisis I was forced to marry at my age.

**Interviewer:** Did you say you were forced to marry?

**Veronica:** Yes. Since I was displaced, I came here hoping to go to school but things did not turn out the way I had envisaged and I had to get involve with a man.

**Interviewer:** How long did you know the man before getting into his house?

**Veronica:** It was not up to a year.

**Interviewer:** Not up to a year! Did you make any marriage rites, any marriage arrangements? Did he see your family?

**Veronica:** No. He too cannot go back to the village because of the crisis.

**Interviewer:** Is he also from your village?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So, did you just find yourselves and decided to stay together?

**Veronica:** Not really. We have been discussing but it was not yet time for marriage. We got into it earlier as a result of the crisis.

**Interviewer:** How is he? Is he is realizing his dreams or is he just struggling like you're doing?

**Veronica:** He is trying. He has a business that he is doing.

**Interviewer:** Do you have children?

**Veronica:** I have a child.

**Interviewer:** How are your living conditions? Do you have a comfortable? Do you have water?  
Do you have food that you need to eat every day?

**Veronica:** We have water problems, but for food we are managing what is there.

**Interviewer:** What kind of house do you live in? In a single room, or are you able to raise funds  
with which to pay a bigger house for your family?

**Veronica:** We live in a two-rooms house.

**Interviewer:** How many of you are living in your two-rooms house?

**Veronica:** Nine of us, including my husband and the child, are living in those two rooms.

**Interviewer:** Hmmm. It must be very difficult. Who are those extra five persons? Are they  
displaced persons who have come under your own shelter?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much. What can you say about war? What do you think about  
war?

**Veronica:** War is very bad because it makes people not to realise their dreams and people also  
die when it is not yet their God-designed time of death.

**Interviewer:** Have you lost any people in your family to the crisis?

**Veronica:** Yes, I have lost some people in my family.

**Interviewer:** Were they shot dead?



**Veronica:** They were killed by stray bullets.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for sharing your story. We pray that someday this crisis will come to an end and that the international will also step in to see if they can do some negotiations for peace to reign here.

## **Betila's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon Betila. You're one of the internally displaced persons. Could you please tell us your experiences? How has it been? How did you find yourself here in Bamenda? How are you living here? How are you coping with life?

**Betila:** Since the crisis started I have been facing difficulties. I left the village because of the crisis. As the crisis started people were being killed and houses were being burnt and I had nowhere to go than to escape to Bamenda. I have lost many people in my family to the crisis. My brother was killed in the crisis. Too many people were killed. I am not happy with the crisis.

**Interviewer:** Oh, I'm sorry to hear that your brother was killed. Who else died in your family because of the crisis?

**Betila:** My cousin was also killed in the same way like my brother and their houses were equally burnt down. All of that traumatized me and I had to leave the village. I came here to find a refuge. So the small thing that I am managing here is because I do not have anything better to be doing. When I was in the village things were better because I had many things that I was managing life with. I am trying to buy a few food items and retail on a counter but nothing is moving. Things are very difficult. All of this suffering is because of the crisis. I am not happy.

**Interviewer:** Are you married?

**Betila:** Yes, I am married.

**Interviewer:** Were you married before the crisis started or did you get married during the crisis?

**Betila:** I was already married before the crisis started.

**Interviewer:** So, as you were running away from the village, did you run along with your husband and children?

**Betila:** Yes, we all ran together to Bamenda.

**Interviewer:** I learned that so many people escape and spend nights in the bushes in order to stay safe. Did it ever happen to you and your family?

**Betila:** Yes. We had to escape and sleep in the bush in most occasions.

**Interviewer:** With your children?

**Betila:** Yes, we had to stay in the bush with our children. They burnt our houses and we had to stay in the bush for some days.

**Interviewer:** Was your own house burnt?

**Betila:** Yes, our house was burnt down.

**Interviewer:** It's a sad story. So, now that you are here in Bamenda, where do you live? Are you renting or do you have a free home?

**Betila:** We are renting a house and managing our life there.

**Interviewer:** How many of you are living in that house that you are renting? Do you have other IDPs living with you or is it just you, your husband and your kids?

**Betila:** It's only my family; my husband and my kids.

**Interviewer:** Ok Betila, I am so sorry to hear that you had to go through all this, the loss of your immediate family relations and others.

**Betila:** Thank you Dr.

**Interviewer:** What about your parents? Are they still alive?

**Betila:** They're alive.

**Interviewer:** Where are they?

**Betila:** They're in the village. But they only go there from time to time to do their farm work and then return to Douala for safety. When it is time to harvest they go back to the village and harvest the food.

**Interviewer:** Do you mean that your father and mother have also escaped from the village and are now IDPs in Douala?

**Betila:** Yes. Everyone has escaped from the village. Even my younger ones are also in Douala.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you very much. It's our prayer that someday everyone will smile, everyone will be safe, and everyone will be in peace. Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

## **Delphine's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good evening Delphine

**Delphine:** Good evening.

**Interviewer:** I wish to hear your story on your experiences as far as this Anglophone Crisis is concerned. How was it back in your village? You are here in Bamenda but this is not your real village, this is not where you were based before the war. How has the crisis affected you?

**Delphine:** The crisis has affected me in so many ways. While I was still in the village I was I was living with a man, but not legally married. We used to live together without any problems but as soon as the crisis started problems started. I used to manage my life with so many things such as farming, and sewing. I learned sewing by force. I used to sew women's pants and also do traditional embroidery. My husband used to take care of the children by providing their basic needs but at some moment when the crisis started it was not all that easy.

**Interviewer:** So what happened? Was he no longer able to raise money during the crisis?

**Delphine:** Yes. Everything just stopped. There was no work.

**Interviewer:** What about your own business? Were you able to raise any money again?

**Delphine:** It was not easy again, so I tried some other things. I used to fry doughnuts and puff-puff but it was not yielding any interest. It was not easy to get capital and I sometimes had to go and borrow money in order to continue with the business. After selling I had to go and pay back the money.

**Interviewer:** So the business had not much turn out?

**Delphine:** Yes, it was difficult, I kept pushing on even though things were becoming worse.

**Interviewer:** How many children have you?

**Delphine:** I have four children.

**Interviewer:** And now, at that time when the crisis started and things became tough were they going to school?

**Delphine:** They were going to school. I did my best to send them to school and at times I used to teach them in the house when there used to be no school for one or more weeks. I used to go to my farm after which I went and worked in other people's farms and when they paid me I would come and manage and buy certain things that were needed in the house. As I was struggling, I was hoping that someday things would be good, but instead, they became worse.

**Interviewer:** What about your husband? Was he also working hard to see what he could support the family with?

**Delphine:** Not at all. At times when he managed and got a little money he would spend all of it on alcohol and come back very drunk. At times he used to beat me.

**Interviewer:** So he was a drunk?

**Delphine:** He was a drunk.

**Interviewer:** And when he beat you, did you have anywhere to run to?

**Delphine:** I used to run to one of my uncles. When I got there, my uncle would send me back. He used to take me back to my husband and tried to counsel him, but after sometime my husband would start beating me again. This happened over and over and when it came to the worst, I

could no longer bear it. The first time I took the children and escaped to my mother's house, he came and took the children back to his place. I did not bother. I allowed the children there and stayed with my mother for two weeks. He thought that it was easy to stay with those children without me, but it was not easy, so he came back and pleaded with me to go back to his house. I said to my mum, 'I love my children, let me go back there for the sake of the children even if it means death for me. Let me do it for the sake of the children'. That is how I went back, but unfortunately all the promises he made that he would not lay his hands on me again failed. He started beating me again and just had to quit. The day I had to leave, he told me that even if he came to our home and killed me nobody would come and ask him anything.

**Interviewer:** were you legally married to him?

**Delphine:** I was not legally married to him. So I told myself that rather than stay with him and risk my life, I should better go die in my parent's home rather than dying in such a place where I was not legally married. That is what made me to carry the children away. He tried all possible means to get back the children, but I am thankful to God that he did not succeed.

**Interviewer:** When you went with the children to your mother's house, was the situation easy with her?

**Delphine:** It was not easy at all. My mother was also struggling with her own crisis and we found it very difficult to cope in the village with her. It was during the hard moments that my aunt succeeded in taking me and the children here in Bamenda. She has sent both me and the children to school and I am very happy for her.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

## **Lidwina's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon Lidwina. I am an International Human Rights Art Festival Fellow and I am sourcing, collecting, recording and documenting the stories of the people who are internally displaced due to the ongoing Anglophone Crisis. You are one of those who have been displaced and you have left your village where you were based before the crisis and you are now here as an IDP. Please can you share your experiences with us? What are the circumstances that that caused you to leave your home?

**Lidwina:** Thank you very much. It was not easy for my family and I. I have four kids and when the crisis started it was not easy and I had to take my children and run away. When I was running with my children, I did not know where I was going to, but the hand of God led me and I succeeded in reaching here with my family. I didn't take anything with me except my children. We left everything that we had behind. We did not use the main road or the highway when we were escaping, rather, we used bush roads and that took us days. At least when we reached some places where there were people and cried for help, they did give us some help. Some people gave us some money which we used and paid our transport to Bamenda.

**Interviewer:** The crisis started in 2016, did you just leave your village immediately? How were their circumstances before you got to the point of deciding to run away from the village?

**Lidwina:** I did not leave my village immediately the crisis started because I was expecting the maybe it would finish. So as it continued, they were burning houses, and children were in danger. Sometimes you were afraid that if you send your child, they will rape your child.

**Interviewer:** I can imagine. How was the situation when you came to Bamenda?



**Lidwina:** When I reached here with my children, there was no way. I cried for help, people helped me and I was able to rent a room for my family and we started managing our lives there.

**Interviewer:** How many of you are in that one room?

**Lidwina:** We are seven of us. I have four children, myself, my husband and my mother-in-law.

**Interviewer:** Living in one room!

**Lidwina:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How old are the children? Are they already adolescents?

**Lidwina:** Yes, my first daughter is sixteen years old, the second ten years and my twin boys are six years old.

**Interviewer:** So how are you surviving? Do you have a permanent job now or do you just do odd jobs? Do you really have something substantial to do?

**Lidwina:** Sister, it's not easy for me. I don't have a job, but when I see somebody who needs someone to work for him or her, then I can work in order to have something to sustain my family with.

**Interviewer:** Okay, when the crisis started and you were in the village for some years before you finally decided to leave, were your children going to school?

**Lidwina:** Yes, somehow the schools were on though on and off but I did not send my children to school because as a mother, one was always afraid that if they go, maybe something will happen to them.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much Lidwina for sharing your story with us. It is so sad that you once had a home of your own, but now you have to patch in one single room with your entire family. We pray and hope that someday the situation will change and people will go back to their respective homes. Have a nice evening.

**Lidwina:** Thank you.

## **Christian's Story**

**Christian:** At first I used to live with my parents in our family home in my village. However, when the crisis started life became too hard and we were living in constant fear because there were always gun shots in the village. At one point we had to always run into the bushes for safety for the violence was too much with the gun shots and in order to stay safe we always had to escape into the bushes and wait there until the shootings abated. That went on for several months, everything came to a standstill as far as educational and business activities were concerned. Many people were afraid and could not come out in the public. One year, the shootings were too frightening and close to our family home and so everyone in the neighbourhood took to their feet as usual. My entire household was scattered in all directions and I found myself alone in the bush because I lost track of my parents since the heavy shooting were unpredictable and everyone was just running for his or her dear. That is how my family scattered on that fateful day. My siblings took their own directions, my parents took theirs and I was left alone. When evening came, I started trekking to a direction that I did not know. I was just trekking to anywhere and that is how I found myself around Bamenda town. I could not call out loud in the bush to hear if any of my family members would answer since that was to betray myself in case the gun men were close by. It was very frightening.

**Interviewer:** At exactly what time did you leave the village?

**Christian:** I left the village at 4pm because the gun shots were too much and one could not venture out of his or her hiding place. I trekked in the bush not actually knowing where I was going to but I could at least guess that the direction I was following led to the city which was 20

kilometres away from my village. I had a small bag with me. I had picked a few of my clothes since I knew that I would need them as we were obliged sometimes to spend nights taking refuge in the bushes. What also made me to pick my clothes that day was because being a young boy in my village was very risky as the boys were mostly harassed and I have been thinking of how to leave the village. So that evening, I trekked towards Bamenda and when the journey became too tiring especially as I was walking alone, I came to an abandoned house and just went into it and spent the rest of the night there.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe how the house looked like? Were you not afraid of maybe snakes?

**Christian:** I was not afraid of anything at that moment, snakes and mosquitoes were now a less danger compared to the gun shots. Bullets are no friend of anybody. I even think that at that moment snakes and mosquitoes could even be friendlier to human beings than the gun shots. The house was surrounded by an overgrown bush, so I tore my way into one of the rooms. The doors had fallen off or may have been hacked opened during some of the attacks in that areas and the house occupants had probably been killed or had migrated to some other regions for safety. There was no sign of life in that area, I guess that I was the only human being there. There were also no domestic animals but at least I could hear the sounds of a few birds.

**Interviewer:** What happened when morning came? Did you have anything to eat?

**Christian:** Very early in the morning I had to wake up and continue my journey. Hunger was the last thing that I wanted to attend to, I had to be safe first. So I got up and continued my journey to Bamenda town. I was heading towards to my aunt's place since she lived in Bamenda. I have

been once with her and so I knew where I would go if I entered the city. When finally got to my aunt's house, she was very happy to see me.

**Interviewer:** At the place where you slept that night, did you have anything to cover yourself with?

**Christian:** I left the house just with my bag which contained about three or four dresses. There was no time for me to pack my dresses because the gun shots and the tensions were too much so I could not bear to stay in that danger in the name of packing and so I took only a few clothing that I needed most. I left immediately with the few I could pick.

**Interviewer:** Did your parents know that you were leaving the house?

**Christian:** No, we left the house earlier together but I did not know where they went to. I thought that they too had gone to a safe place and so I had to find my own way. However, I later reconnected with them and they are managing their life in the village.

**Interviewer:** How did you get connected to your parents again?

**Christian:** I did not have a phone anymore as it got missing during the hardships that we went through in my village. I even lost contact with my siblings. The entire family was scattered and some of my siblings found their way to other regions and cities like in Douala, Yaoundé and the Northern Region of the country. I lost touch with my sibling for over one year and even now we hardly communicate as they too are struggling wherever they are and life is not easy there. They're all school drop outs as well and do not have any particular professional skills that can grant them a good job.

**Interviewer:** How do they survive then?

**Christian:** They only do odd jobs in the cities where they have been displaced to, and it is very difficult. They are just living from hand to mouth. They have to rent houses, and buy everything that they need for survival; water, food, medications. Even the things which were free in the village like water are sold in the cities. One could also go to the farm and harvest food in the village but in the cities where they have escaped to, there are no farms for them.

**Interviewer:** How free is the village water?

**Christian:** In the village we had our community water which everyone worked for. The villagers contributed and then paid experts to build a water catchment which could supply the entire community with water and the water source was very fresh and unpolluted. It was very clean and treated so that no one got contaminated. However, that is not the case in the cities where my siblings have escaped to for safety. They are often sick because the water in the cities is not safe. They often suffer from water borne diseases like diarrhea and typhoid fever. The poor sanitation in those cities also gives room for mosquitoes to breed at will and are a health hazard to the people. All the little money that my siblings get is either spent on food, medications or rents. They just work and indirectly give the money back to the indigenes on those places. It's not easy.

**Interviewer:** How are your parents? Where are they now?

**Christian:** They are struggling in the village. None of us is living with them.

**Interviewer:** Those days that the gun firing was too much, were you able cook? Did you have something to eat? How were you coping in the village?

**Christian:** There was no time to cook because the danger was too much so when you woke up you were just being alert since the gun firing was coming from all ends so one never knew where

it would come from each day. As such, one just got up and was on alert for the next minute to run. It was a horror. Everyone was just trying to save their lives.

**Interviewer:** I understand that crisis is everywhere including the cities and most homes in the cities are crowded due to IDPs who are seeking refuge in the homes of their relations in the city. Are there some other relations of your aunt who have fled to her home for safety too?

**Christian:** Yes, there are many. There are fifteen of us living in that house.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. Fifteen is a great number for one household. How many bedrooms are in that house?

**Christian:** There are five bed rooms.

**Interviewer:** Five bedrooms for fifteen people? That's hard.

**Christian:** Yes, that's how it has been for the past five years. And every one of them is dependent on my aunt and her husband. She does not have any other choice than to accept them when they come crying for help.

**Interviewer:** How many meals do you have per day in that house?

**Christian:** We eat once a day. Food is scarce and things have become very expensive.

**Interviewer:** Have you been able to revisit your village again since you left that fateful day?

**Christian:** No. I cannot go to the village even now because it is still very dangerous for many people who left the village to return. For instance, my aunt's husband died six months ago but we could not take his corpse for burial in the village due to the insecurity. We had to bury him in the city and conduct all the burial rites and ceremonies in the city. Even my grandmother died

and we the grandchildren and other relatives could not go to the village to bury her. Only my parents and a few relative who remained in the village buried her. I don't know when we will ever go to the village again.

**Interviewer:** What have you been doing since you came to city and could no longer continue your education?

**Christian:** I learned a trade. I did apprenticeship in electronics, phone repairs etc. I completed that apprenticeship two years ago and I have been trying to do a few jobs sin that field but due to the crisis the opportunities are rare and clients too are hard to come by. Things are actually very tough for me. I however thank God that I am alive.

**Interviewer:** What are your future plans?

**Christian:** If things come to normal I will like to continue my education. I can open a workshop and then generate the income from there to sponsor myself in school. I really pray that the crisis should come to an end.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.



## **Hadissa's story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Hadissa. How old are you?

**Hadissa:** I am sixteen.

**Interviewer:** Where are your parents?

**Hadissa:** I am orphan.

**Interviewer:** Are you an orphan of one or both parents?

**Hadissa:** Both my parents are dead.

**Interviewer:** When did they die?

**Hadissa:** My mother died two years ago and my father died just of recent.

**Interviewer:** Where did you father die? Was it here in Bamenda?

**Hadissa:** Yes, it was here in Bamenda.

**Interviewer:** Was it due to the crisis or was he sick?

**Hadissa:** He was sick.

**Interviewer:** How were the conditions? Did he have the means to go to the hospital or...?

**Hadissa:** He didn't have the money to go to the hospital.

**Interviewer:** Were you people living initially in Bamenda or somewhere else?

**Hadissa:** We were living initially in Buea.

**Interviewer:** Were you living in Buea with your father and mother?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How were the conditions there? What happened before your mother died?

**Hadissa:** She was sick and she was suffering too much.

**Interviewer:** Don't cry. I will see in what way I can be supporting you okay? Stop crying.

**Hadissa:** Thank you madam.

**Interviewer:** Now I just want to find out, when the crisis broke out, you people were in Buea.

How was life there?

**Hadissa:** My mother was a trader. She used to sell things in the market, but when the crisis began she could no longer sell. She could no longer provide my school fees.

**Interviewer:** In what kind of house were you living in in the South West?

**Hadissa:** We were staying in a karabut house<sup>2</sup>.

**Interviewer:** How many rooms?

**Hadissa:** One room.

**Interviewer:** How many of you were living there?

**Hadissa:** Five of us.

**Interviewer:** Do you have siblings?

**Hadissa:** Yes, I have two brothers.

**Interviewer:** Where are they? Are you the first child?

**Hadissa:** Yes, I am the first. One of my brothers is here. The other one is in Buea.

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<sup>2</sup> A kind of make shift plank house common in the forest regions of Cameroon.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Hadissa:** One man took one of my brothers to be taking care of him in Buea.

**Interviewer:** Is that one your elder brother or your younger brother?

**Hadissa:** My younger brother.

**Interviewer:** Where is the man who took your brother from? Is he from your village?

**Hadissa:** No. He is from Buea. He was my father's friend.

**Interviewer:** What about your other brother?

**Hadissa:** The other one is here.

**Interviewer:** Also with your grandmother?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** In what class is he?

**Hadissa:** He is in Form One.

**Interviewer:** From what I understand, you all came to Bamenda after your mother the death of your mother. That was two years ago. When you came here, did your father get something to be doing?

**Hadissa:** He was very ill.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that's sad. Is your grandmother with whom you are living now the mother of your father?

**Hadissa:** Yes, but she is old. She cannot walk.

**Interviewer:** She cannot walk? So how do you people get food? If that is the case, when your father came up to Bamenda with you and your sibling, how did you cope since your father was very ill and your grandmother is too old to help you? Was there a way for your father to go to the hospital?

**Hadissa:** The people at the Mosque contributed money and helped us.

**Interviewer:** Was the help given all the times or was it just once?

**Hadissa:** Just once.

**Interviewer:** So your father could not cope? How long is it now since he died?

**Hadissa:** One year.

**Interviewer:** Where did your father die? In the house or in the hospital?

**Hadissa:** He died with me and my grandmother.

**Interviewer:** In the house?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** I'm so sorry about that Hadissa. Did you say your grandmother cannot walk?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Walk or work?

**Hadissa:** She cannot walk. Her legs are paining.

**Interviewer:** Has she any medications that she is taking to stop the pain in her legs?

**Hadissa:** No she doesn't.

**Interviewer:** Then how do you all survive? Are you doing any business?

**Hadissa:** She's selling and struggling to help us.

**Interviewer:** What is she selling?

**Hadissa:** She is selling gateaux<sup>3</sup>.

**Interviewer:** Is she the one making it or does she buy to resell?

**Hadissa:** She is the one making it, then she gives us to go and sell.

**Interviewer:** When do you sell it? When you close from school?

**Hadissa:** Yes, but sometimes I sell it before going to school.

**Interviewer:** When you came here with your father did you just go to school immediately?

When the crisis started and you were in the South West, did you drop out of school?

**Hadissa:** I dropped out of school.

**Interviewer:** How many years did you make at home?

**Hadissa:** I made two years at home.

**Interviewer:** Was that before you came up to Bamenda?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Now, you said that sometimes you sell in the morning before going to school, do you get to school in time?

**Hadissa:** Yes, I do.

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<sup>3</sup> A kind of dough made out of flour and fried into balls.

**Interviewer:** Where do you go to sell? Does your grandmother fry early in the morning?

**Hadissa:** Yes, she fries early in the morning then we carry it on our heads and walk in the neighbourhood and sell.

**Interviewer:** At what time does she get up to fry?

**Hadissa:** Five.

**Interviewer:** Five. Do you and your kid brother get up to help her?

**Hadissa:** Yes, we get up together.

**Interviewer:** How big is the house?

**Hadissa:** Two rooms.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by two rooms? Parlour and one bedroom or two bedrooms and parlour?

**Hadissa:** Single bedroom and parlour.

**Interviewer:** How many of you are in the house?

**Hadissa:** Three of us.

**Interviewer:** Is it your grandmother that is paying your school fees?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Has she already paid?

**Hadissa:** No.

**Interviewer:** Are you sure?

**Hadissa:** Yes. She is still struggling to pay. She started paying for my brother.

**Interviewer:** Does it mean she has paid half of your school fees?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Do you have your text books and your writing material?

**Hadissa:** No, I don't. I have only five exercise books.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. How many subjects?

**Hadissa:** I am sharing the exercise books for many subjects.

**Interviewer:** How old is your younger brother who is here in Bamenda?

**Hadissa:** He is ten years old.

**Interviewer:** Ten. What about the other one that was taken to Buea?

**Hadissa:** That one is six years old.

**Interviewer:** Six years. Hmm. So your father brought the three of you here to stay with your grandmother before death snatched him away?

**Hadissa:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How do you get your basic needs? Sanitary towels and others?

**Hadissa:** Sometimes my grandmother buys but sometimes she doesn't when she has no money.

**Interviewer:** Did you pass your first term exams?

**Hadissa:** I never saw my report card because I have not paid my fees.

**Interviewer:** Alright. When you were running away from the South West, did your father take his tailoring equipment?

**Hadissa:** No. we did not take anything. He was very sick and it was the Mosque that contributed money and helped to pay our transport before we could come here.

**Interviewer:** was the money enough to take him to the hospital?

**Hadissa:** No it wasn't. we could only pay our transport with it.

**Interviewer:** What are your plans for the future? What do you want to become?

**Hadissa:** I want to do law and become a lawyer.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for taking the courage to share your sad story. We pray that luck will be on your side and that you'll become what you wish to become in the future.



## **Ornella's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Ornella. Good afternoon. You said that you are an Internally Displaced person. Can you tell me your story?

**Ornella:** I am seventeen years old. We used to live with our parents in our village. So, when I was about seven years old my father told my mother that he would love to go to Yaoundé and look for something that he could be doing and raising funds in order to support the family financially. When he left for Yaoundé, he never came back and so my mother was very angry and each time my mother called him, he would lie to us. Subsequently when my elder sister passed her First School leaving Examination my father came and then that he wanted to take them to Bamenda. My mother accepted and then he took them to Bamenda. My mother's elder sister and her husband were also here in Bamenda. My father rented a house for my mother and my elder sister. I was the only left behind in the village.

**Interviewer:** With whom were you living in the village?

**Ornella:** I was living with my grandmother. My grandmother was a patient and whenever she fell sick she would come to Bamenda and make about one or two months before coming back to the village.

**Interviewer:** When your grandmother left for Bamenda during her sick periods, where did you live?

**Ornella:** I even looked for neighbours or my aunts. I used to go to my aunt's place and stay there till my grandmother came back. When I used to go my aunt's house, she had a male child who used to take advantage of me.

**Interviewer:** In what way did he take advantage of you?

**Ornella:** He used event to try to harass me sexually. He actually used to fondle me, but I fought to prevent him from having anything further with me. Because of that threat from my aunt's son, I was forced to stay in my grandmother's house alone each time she travelled to Bamenda. When I couldn't bear staying alone, I went to my friends' house and stayed there.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Ornella:** When my father took my mother and siblings to Bamenda, he abandoned them there. My mother was selling shoes at the Bamenda main market. I continued school in the village until I had my First School Leaving Certificate and the Common Entrance Examinations. After that, I came to Bamenda and started form one in the secondary school. The crisis started that year and during that time my father's elder sister who was living in the village came to Bamenda and took me and my siblings us to go and meet our father in Yaoundé. She told us that since our father had abandoned our mother, we should go to Yaoundé and meet him and see how the whole thing would look like.

**Interviewer:** Did you say that when the crisis started your mother could not sell again?

**Ornella:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How many of you went to see your father?

**Ornella:** We are four of us, but the person who comes after was still too young and so she stayed behind with my mother. I went to Yaoundé with my elder brother and elder sister.

**Interviewer:** Are you the third of our children?

**Ornella:** Yes, I am the third. But that year my younger sister and my mother went to Bafoussam.

**Interviewer:** Alright, go on.

**Ornella:** When we arrived in Yaoundé, we spent one month at home and then my father sent my elder siblings to an evening school. They were studying there and I was the only one who stayed at home.

**Interviewer:** Does it mean that you didn't get enrolled in any school?

**Ornella:** Yes, I stayed at home for two extra months before he enrolled me in another evening school different from the one my siblings were attending. I school there for one year and my results were very good. I was the second in order of merit during the promotion exams that first years. I was promoted to form three but when the new academic year started, my father refused to send me to school. My elder had to work in people's homes as either a nanny or house help in order to sponsor herself in the evening school. My elder brother had to drop out of school and start learning how to repair phones from his friends. I was the only one left at home with nothing doing because by that time I was too young to do anything in order to help myself. I could not look for a job at that age.

**Interviewer:** How old were you at that time?

**Ornella:** At that time, I was fifteen. So I was staying in the house every day. My father looked for one male teacher to be teaching me at home, but every day when the teacher came he would tell me that he wanted to be dating me, but each time he said that I told him that I didn't want to do such a thing. However, he the teacher kept insisting that I must go out with him. However, I

didn't want to tell my father what was happening. [She starts sobbing]. Afterwards my father started accusing me that I do not want to learn.

**Interviewer:** Please stop crying. Where was your father when this man came to teach you each day?

**Ornella:** My father was at work. He was a business person in one of the quarters in the city.

**Interviewer:** What was he selling.

**Ornella:** My father was selling provision things like rice, oil, soaps, and so on and so forth.

**Interviewer:** Was he selling for someone or was it his shop?

**Ornella:** It was his shop.

**Interviewer:** That means your father had money but he refused to help you. Did he have another woman, wife?

**Ornella:** Yes, he did.

**Interviewer:** Now, in that house where you went to live with your father, was there another woman living there with him?

**Ornella:** No, he used to come back home with a girl every evening.

**Interviewer:** And the girl would spend the night and go back in the morning?

**Ornella:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Did the girl have a child with your father?

**Ornella:** No. my father had a child with another woman but when we came to Yaoundé we started seeing him but a with a different woman.

**Interviewer:** Your father had so much money and he couldn't help you. Did you say your elder sister was doing house help work in order to sponsor herself in the evening school?

**Ornella:** Yes. My brother dropped out of school and starting learning how to repair phones from his friends.

**Interviewer:** From his own friends and not even sponsored by your father!

**Ornella:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** I am asking myself this question, how was one teacher going to teach you all the subjects in the school?

**Interviewer:** Secondary school subjects are specialized subjects and one teacher cannot probably teach more than two different subjects. Even if one person had to try, a teacher of English language could teach literature in English and then try history, but beyond that, it would be very impossible. Subjects like mathematics, Physics, logic, economics and geography would require other special skills in order for someone to teach them.

**Interviewer:** That is it.

**Ornella:** Was it then an arrangement from behind for the man to come and force you into marriage?

**Interviewer:** Yes, it certainly was. That's what they were trying to do because after the teacher asked me to be going out with him and I refused, one day my father came back home and I told him that the teacher he sent to be teaching me is always asking me to go out of town spend time with him somewhere far away from the house. Once I told him that, my father started beating saying that I don't want to go to school. He asked me why I refused to go out with the teacher

and I explained that I was afraid that if I went out with the teacher he would come and beat me. Afterwards, he paid some few people in the neighbourhood and told them that if they see me standing with anybody they should come and tell him.

**Interviewer:** He paid the people?

**Ornella:** Yes, he paid them to be watching over me and should they see me with anybody they should report to him.

**Interviewer:** So you were being spied?

**Ornella:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How old was the teacher?

**Ornella:** The man was very old. I think he was above thirty years.

**Interviewer:** And you were fifteen.

**Ornella:** Yes, I was fifteen. But every day when he came to teach me he would ask me to go out with him.

**Interviewer:** What finally happened?

**Ornella:** The teacher stopped coming and afterwards my father went and brought a man. I don't know where the man was staying but my father called for him. We had never seen the man before. Since my elder sister and I were sleeping on the mattress which we used to put on the parlour floor at night to sleep on while my brother slept on a chair, my father ordered my elder sister to move to the chair while the new man was to be sleeping with me on that mattress.

**Interviewer:** Where was your brother?

**Ornella:** My brother had already left the house. When my brother was with us, three of us were sharing that mattress on the floor. Only my elder sister and I were with my father when he called for that man.

**Interviewer:** How old was the uncle?

**Ornella:** The uncle was about thirty years. He was forcing himself on me every night. At one moment I was no longer sleeping in the house. Sometimes I even woke up around 2 O'clock in the night go and sit in one chapel that was near our house. There was a Catholic church near our house.

**Interviewer:** Was the gate to the church always open?

**Ornella:** Yes, the gate was always open.

**Interviewer:** Were you sleeping inside the church hall or were you sleeping outside?

**Ornella:** I was sleeping inside the church hall and sometimes I would wait till the other Christians come for mass and after the mass I used to tarry there for while so that by the time I went home my father would have already gone to work.

**Interviewer:** Was the chapel always open?

**Ornella:** Yes it was always open.

**Interviewer:** How long did that uncle stay with you people?

**Ornella:** The uncle stayed there until I had to escape back to Bamenda. I left Yaoundé and came to Bamenda without my father's knowledge.

**Interviewer:** How did you get the transport?

**Ornella:** I explained everything to my mother's elder sister. She has a daughter who is a teacher and that her daughter sent my transport through my elder sister's mobile money contact. So, my elder sister withdrew the money and gave me and I packed my things and got set. One Sunday evening I left the house, travelled that night and arrived in Bamenda on Monday morning.

**Interviewer:** Did any of the men who attempted to sleep with you ever succeed?

**Ornella:** No, they didn't.

**Interviewer:** Congratulations. You're a brave good girl.

**Ornella:** Thank you madam.

**Interviewer:** So, what did your elder sister say about what the man was doing? Was she aware about it?

**Ornella:** My elder sister knew everything; she is 22 years old today.

**Interviewer:** In what class was she at that time?

**Ornella:** She was in Upper Sixth

**Interviewer:** Did she enter Upper Sixth when you went to Yaoundé?

**Ornella:** No, when we arrived in Yaoundé she entered form five wrote her GCE Ordinary Level and passed.

**Interviewer:** Was that when she dropped out of school?

**Ornella:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** That implies each of your siblings did just one year in school and the dropped and could only engage in odd jobs.



**Ornella:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** Where is your elder sister now?

**Ornella:** She is in the University of Bamenda.

**Interviewer:** So she also came back to Bamenda.

**Ornella:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What did your father do when you ran away from Yaoundé?

**Ornella:** When my father and that uncle did not see me in the house that night, they told my elder sister that they were sure that I was in a boy's house. However, my elder sister said that she didn't know anything about my whereabouts. The next morning, my father called his elder sister in the village and she told him that I was in Bamenda. When he heard about it, they stopped looking for me and he started beating my elder sister and accusing her for conniving with me to escape. He beat my elder sister every day and night. He even stopped giving money for food to her. Even when we were all in Yaoundé, my father was not giving us money for food. We struggled on our own to get whatever we needed.

**Interviewer:** So how were you doing in order to survive since your father was not consistent in giving you money for food and your other needs?

**Ornella:** We only depended on what my mother could send to us from time to time. When we left for Yaoundé my mother had to go back to the village.

**Interviewer:** So she had to go back to the village.

**Ornella:** Yes madam.

**Interviewer:** What was she doing there?

**Ornella:** She was farming.

**Interviewer:** Was it because she didn't have a farm in Bamenda?

**Ornella:** Yes. And she did not also have the money to continue paying the rents of the house in which she was staying.

**Interviewer:** So, from your story, I understand the crisis became intensified in your village, so you father said he would move the entire family to Bamenda and so all of you relocated to Bamenda.

**Ornella:** No, my father first of all left for Yaoundé in order to feign for the family while we were still in the village. At that time the crisis had not yet started. However, when he got to Yaoundé he started having affairs with other women.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Ornella:** So when my mother heard about it she had to force herself to go to Yaoundé. My mother took me and my younger sister to Yaoundé. When we arrived in Yaoundé, we were at the moto park and my mother called father. My father came to the park to see us. My mother was standing beside me and buying something from one hawker at the moto park when my father arrived. When he noticed that my mother was distracted by the thing she was buying, he quietly took me away without my mother's knowledge. That set confusion and my mother thought that I had been stolen since she did not know the person that carried me away. Besides, it was my mother's first time to visit Yaoundé and she did not know where my father was living. My father took me to his house and asked me to eat but I told him that I did not want to eat. As he carried

me from the park, I was crying and shouting, calling for mother since I did not know him. He kept me in his house until evening. That evening he took me to the park and we took another bus and returned to another village near Bamenda and begged his cousin to take me, but his cousin refused so he was obliged to take me back to his elder sister in our own village. Yet, his elder sister refused to me and that was when he took me to my mother's compound. At that time my grandmother was lying on her sick bed and my father just put me beside her on the bed and left. By that time my father had already married another woman with whom he already had a child in Yaoundé and that is how everything just started crumbling in my family.

**Interviewer:** What happened with your elder sister when you finally left Yaoundé? Did she return to Bamenda in order to have her Advance Level?

**Ornella:** No. My elder sister wrote her Advance Level in Yaoundé since she was the working and paying her school fees. When she worked my father would still take the money again and would not give her a dime. Because of that, when she went to school they drove her for school fees. It was thanks to the woman for whom she was working that she was able to pay her fees. The woman helped her and paid her fees in the evening school that she was attending. She could only go to an evening school since she had to work during the day. However, she could not make it at the advance level. Immediately she wrote the exams she left Yaoundé and came back to Bamenda and when the results came out negative, she had to repeat it here in Bamenda. At that time, it was my mother who paid her fees. My elder sister is now in the university and she struggles on her own to pay her fees while my mother only pays for my younger sister and me. My elder brother is now in Douala and has continued learning how to repair phones.

**Interviewer:** With whom does he live in Douala?

**Ornella:** He lives with my mother's elder brother.

**Interviewer:** How long did you and your siblings stay in Yaoundé?

**Ornella:** We stayed in Yaoundé for about three years.

**Interviewer:** Can you remember from which year to which year you stayed there?

**Ornella:** I can't really remember, but I came back to Bamenda two years ago.

**Interviewer:** That means you went to Yaoundé in 2017 and then came back in 2019.

**Ornella:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** What are your plans for the future?

**Ornella:** My plans are that I want to study well and become a lawyer.

**Interviewer:** Why a lawyer?

**Ornella:** I want to judge cases.

**Interviewer:** What do you think about the treatment of the girl child? Do think that if you were a boy you would have been treated in the same way? If tomorrow become a lawyer, what would you do to such fathers who treat their female children the way your father treated you?

**Ornella:** The only thing I would do is that I would bring him to the social welfare where they will give orders to sponsor his children and if he fails they will have to lock him up.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. I wish you best for your future.

## **Calixter's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Calixter. Good morning.

**Calixter:** Good morning.

**Interviewer:** Calixter, I am the International Human Rights Arts Festival Fellow for 2023 and I am collecting stories of some persons who have been internally displaced due to the Anglophone crisis, and you are a young girl who has been internally displaced. Can you please share your story with us? Can you tell me what happened before you left your village and came to this city?

**Calixter:** It was due to the crisis and the horrible killings which made everybody scared, then they stopped schools because everyone was afraid that if they went out of the house they would be killed. Nothing was moving again and so we had to transfer from the village. We had to look for where we could stay safe. I live here with one of my aunts. We actually left our village because of the too much killings.

**Interviewer:** How old were you when the crisis started?

**Calixter:** I was thirteen.

**Interviewer:** How old are you now?

**Calixter:** I am sixteen years old.

**Interviewer:** When did you leave the village?

**Interviewer:** I left the village in 2017 because of the too much killings.

**Interviewer:** How long did you stay at home before resuming school?

**Calixter:** I stayed at home for two years.

**Interviewer:** This aunt with whom you stay, is she your mother or your father's sister?

**Calixter:** No, she is just a family friend.

**Interviewer:** Where are your parents? When you had to move, did you move with your parents or did you have to move alone because you had to look for somewhere where you could at least go to school?

**Calixter:** My parents are in the village. I just needed where I could go and stay in order to continue my education and this woman offered help to my parents by taking me into her house.

**Interviewer:** How is life with her?

**Calixter:** It's normal.

**Interviewer:** Are there some other internally displaced persons living with her?

**Calixter:** Yes, my kid sister is also living with me in this woman's house.

**Interviewer:** How many siblings do you have?

**Calixter:** We're all together six, four boys and two girls.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Calixter:** When the crisis started my elder sister and brother had access to go to Douala and further their education. Meanwhile, my parents were still looking for a place where I would go and settle in order to continue my own schooling.

**Interviewer:** Is that why you stayed at home for three years?

**Calixter:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So, do you often go to the village?

**Calixter:** Yes, I go to the village during the holidays.

**Interviewer:** And how is the situation there?

**Calixter:** The situation in the village is bad and things are getting worse every day. I say that it is getting worse because at first they were not killing women, but now women and girls, including people who have not committed any crime are being killed unfortunately.

**Interviewer:** That's very sad. Have you lost any of your family members?

**Calixter:** Yes, when the crisis started I lost one sister and one brother on the same day.

**Interviewer:** Your sister?

**Calixter:** Yes, my sister and my brother.

**Interviewer:** What happened?

**Calixter:** They were just picked up and shot dead like that. We didn't know until we found the corpses and some were scattered by the bullets. We were moving about and picking pieces of their corpses in order to go and burry.

**Interviewer:** Please stop crying. It's Okay. Take courage. I'm so sorry to hear about this.

**Calixter:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** In which year did that happen?

**Calixter:** That was in 2017.

**Interviewer:** Did you see the corpses on the same day that your siblings disappeared?

**Calixter:** No, we did not see them on the same day since they carried them and killed in a neighbouring village. They were not the only ones. Nine people were picked up and carried away from that same neighbourhood and all the nine were killed.

**Interviewer:** You said you were six siblings. Were you counting the two that have already died?

**Calixter:** Yes, we were all together six before the other two were killed.

**Interviewer:** So you're now four?

**Calixter:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How are your parents doing now?

**Calixter:** They are fine. They have forgotten about the death of my two siblings.

**Interviewer:** When did you say you lost your siblings to the crisis?

**Calixter:** That was in 2017. It was Christmas and so they did not live up to the new year.

**Interviewer:** What do you say about war?

**Calixter:** War is a horrible thing that no one on earth will ever wish to live. I wish that there was no war at all because it has destroyed many lives and property. The war has caused many people pain and as for the death of my sister, I don't think that it can get out of my head.

**Interviewer:** Well it's a difficult thing. We only say time heals but we can never forget the ones we loved that are lost especially in such terrible and devastating conditions but we pray that God will heal the wounds. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. What do you want to become in the future?

**Calixter:** I want to become a banker.



**Interviewer:** Why?

**Calixter:** That's what I love.

**Interviewer:** Have a nice day Calixter. I wish you the best in your entire life.

**Calixter:** Thank you so much.

## **Julius's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Julius. Good afternoon. The Anglophone Crisis has been wrecking the foundations of this region and the South West Region of the country and I know that it has affected so many people. You are one of the internally displaced persons, how has it been? How has this crisis affected your life? I know that you're not originally from Bamenda, but you're here in Bamenda, how did you find yourself here and how are you getting on with life in the face of the crisis?

**Julius:** Good afternoon. I used to work in Ndop even though I'm from Mbiame but due to the crisis I found myself here in Bamenda, unable to freely go to Ndop and to Mbiame, my village. There are many projects that I would have realized in Ndop and in my village Mbiame but due to the crisis I'm unable to realise given the fact that I cannot go there freely. Secondly the sources of income from which I would have gotten money in order to realise the projects have been disturbed by the crisis. So actually the crisis is affecting me negatively in various aspects.

**Interviewer:** So, you said you don't have access to your village due to the crisis. How long has this been? How about your family there? How do you communicate with them? How are they coping? I know that you are a worker, you're somehow well to do and in Africa, Cameroon especially, when there's somebody of your caliber the rest of the family members look up to. How is like with those people back in the village now you cannot have access to them and they cannot have access to you. How are they surviving?

**Julius:** Since the crisis started in 2016, it was in 2018 that things actually became worse with the use of arms and burnings and ill-treatment of people. Since 2018 I have been here in Bamenda

and I cannot be able to go to Ndop freely and I cannot be able to go to Mbiame freely. The villages have become very unsafe grounds and so one can only stay here hoping that someday things will get better.

**Interviewer:** You mentioned that you had so many projects which you could not realise due to the crisis. Can you tell us what some of your projects were?

**Julius:** I had projects that were supposed to affect my family business and projects that were supposed to affect my entire community in the village, Lam. One of such projects was the envisaged construction of two classrooms for the primary school in my village. For the two classrooms project, with my help as a village development leader, I gathered parents, and the villagers and we sat and contributed money which was to be used for the construction of the two classrooms for the village. We put the money together and started the construction of the two classrooms. We had actually raised the walls and when we were about to roof them the crisis started. We actually started doing the roof work when the crisis started I had to abandon the village and come to Bamenda and in due course from that 2018, everything has collapsed. Rain has put down the two buildings and right now the pupils in the village who are supposed to be schooling do not have a classroom where they can go into for schooling. So that is a very serious negative effect of the crisis on the project in the village. Concerning personal projects, I had to construct a personal home in the village, but now due to crisis, I can't go there and carry out that project. Even my farms which I am supposed to farm in the village have remained unfarmed. With respect to Ndop, I also had some areas where I had to do some constructions but there is no way that can be done now. I also had businesses there. We had an Evening School where pupils

who could not go to normal schools could come and learn. I equally had a documentation in Ndop, but I had to abandon it and come to Bamenda for safety. As it stands, this crisis has affected me terribly.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. I'm so sorry that you had actually so much to offer to humanity at different spheres of life, but unfortunately, all your intentions have been thwarted by the crisis. We hope that someday all your dreams will be realized. Have a nice day Julius.

**Julius:** Thank you and same to you.

## **Vincent's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Vincent. Good evening. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Vincent:** I'm Vincent, an IDP living in the west region of Cameroon. Former, I was a teacher in my village of origin. At the start of the crises, I was living in my house near the gendarmerie brigade at the sub Divisional headquarters in my village. This was our home where I was born, and because of the proximity to the brigade, coupled with the exchange of fire arms from both parties, I was in danger together with my family, so, one day, a victim was shot at my door, on the 7/07/2018, in broad day light and I had to leave my house immediately.

I went and started staying in a bush house for about a Year as I couldn't move out of the village because of finances. My children missed two academic years and our lives were in danger. It took me a long time to situate where I could move the children to safety without any support. Secondly as a teacher, I was in danger as Teachers were threatened to death. So, I finally moved to Ngounso in Magba sub division in the West Region of Cameroon. Arriving in the west region, the climate was difficult and I felt ill for about two years. My life was again in serious danger. I moved from hospital to hospital sorting for good health. So, my journey from my village to Magba was really a nightmare. I couldn't make it back home again as my house was now in the red zone of the conflicts.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, livelihood etc.?

**Vincent:** The war has damaged most of my income sources and equally I was very sick for a long time and this has affected my health till date

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Vincent:** My family and I escaped from my house straight into a bush house as living beside the road was dangerous, secondly, going to stay with someone was like adding a burden unto someone's family.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Vincent:** My children had to miss two academic years

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Vincent:** All my family members were equally displaced due to the proximity to the gendarmerie brigade barracks which was the epicentre of the war.

**Interviewer:** How are coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive? Overcrowded with other internally displaced persons?

**Vincent:** My accommodation was very difficult as I had to rent in a very uncondusive environment where there were too many mosquitoes and that spelt danger for our health.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Vincent:** Presently, I don't have access into my house in the village as the house is found in the red zone of the conflicts.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war. What can you tell the world about war?

**Vincent:** War is generally a devastating activity which only destroys properties, monuments, Historical sites and lives. I'll like to share my difficulty as I need clean water where I live. So, any good Well, borehole constructed for me and the people around me will be of great significance, thanks.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. We hope for a peaceful future.

## **Elkana's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good evening. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Elkana:** I was formerly in Bui Division before the crises started. With the ongoing crisis, we could not bear to risk our lives, because of the harassments, and too much gun shots as well as looting of our property, which forced us to move. We left virtually with nothing and our life came back to zero as all of our property were all stolen and some destroyed.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, livelihood?

**Elkana:** It has affected me negatively so much as I loosed my job. I equally fell sick and being homeless, financially down and losing all my properties, I had been seriously traumatized.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Elkana:** I never escaped into a bush or hinterland area.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Elkana:** I was displaced with my family, wife and children.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Elkana:** My children never loosed an academic Year.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?



**Elkana:** Some of my family members were equally displaced to other areas.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive?

Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Elkana:** It's not easy as I'm a jobless man, so to provide for the family is not easy.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Elkana:** I was still programming to construct a house as I was still on rents.

**Interviewer:** . What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war.

What can you tell the world about war?

**Elkana:** War is generally a devastating activity as it brings a lot of setbacks, poverty and pain.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Elkana, for sharing your story with us. I feel sorry that you had to be displaced due to the ongoing crisis. We all pray that someday it comes to an end so that normalcy can return to our region.

**Elkana:** You're welcome.

## **Goddy's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Goddy. Good morning. I'm doing a documentary on the experiences of those who have been internally displaced in the North West Region of Cameroon. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Goddy:** Good morning madam. I will like to say first of all that I am a father of three. I was actually in Batibo, and I was residing beside the gendarmerie brigade barracks where I was renting an apartment. The house was eventually set ablaze in the course of the crisis and all my belongings were destroyed in the fire. So, I had to leave with my family to seek for refuge somewhere for a better life.

**Interviewer:** I'm so sorry to hear that you had to go through of this. Having one's belonging erased by fire is really a horrifying experience and to think that you are alive and are telling the story means that you braved the trials. Courage please. In what other way has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Goddy:** The war has greatly affected me negatively as I was a carpenter and I lost all my jobs and equipment.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Goddy:** We escaped many times to the bush, made thatch roof houses and stayed there for safety.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Goddy:** I had to leave with my children and my wife to the West Region for safety.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids drop out of school due to the crisis?

**Goddy:** My children had to miss two academic years.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Goddy:** My other family members equally escaped seeking safety in far off areas.

**Interviewer:** How are you coming here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive?

Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Goddy:** I'm carrying some petty jobs a carpenter although operating without tools.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Goddy:** I hadn't a house before as I was still on rents.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war.

What can you tell the world about war?

**Goddy:** War is not good as it causes the downfall of the economy, education, loss of lives as well as pain.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Goddy, for sharing your experiences with us.

## **Richard's Story**

**Interviewer:** Hello Richard. Good morning. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Richard:** Good afternoon.

**Interviewer:** Before we continue, may I know how many kids you have?

**Richard:** I am a father of three.

**Interviewer:** Waoo. That's fine. Now tell us your story.

**Richard:** At the start of the crises, I was a C.D.C. Worker at Muyuka, in the South West Region. I was a driver in the company and at the start of the crisis, workers at the C.D.C. were a target and many of my colleagues were killed. I escaped death many times in to the bush under danger and finally I had to move to the West Region for safety.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Richard:** The war has greatly affected me negatively as I have lost my job as a driver and my salary too. I have become jobless, and it has greatly traumatized me. I'm not myself.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Richard:** I escaped into the bush many times for safety.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Richard:** I moved with my family members all to the West Region.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Richard:** My children never missed an academic year as my last child was in the university

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Richard:** Normally, everyone was escaping from danger. So some of my family members escaped into safer zones.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive?

Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Richard:** My accommodation where I'm based now is good although home is home as the nostalgia to go home is still in me.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Richard:** I had not yet constructed, so I haven't a problem per say, but as far as visiting the village is concerned, I cannot go there now as long as there is still insecurity.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war.

What can you tell the world about war?

**Richard:** War is generally very bad. Even though I survived, I lost many family members.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for taking your time to tell us what you've been through because of the war.

## **Jacob's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good morning Jacob. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Jacob:** When the War started, I was in the farm, and when we came home, all the houses in our quarter had been burnt with all our belongings. I then escaped with the children to a nearby village for safety. We trekked for long distances, in the bushes before reaching there. With the hope that schools will resume, I took refuge there for some time and the threats towards Teachers started and finally had to flee the war zone immediately. During this unfaithful day, some villagers were shot to death and many were wounded during the macabre incident.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Jacob:** It has made me to lose so many things, like my farm investments, financial transactions, spending more on rents, buying food and the Education of my children. Equally I had lost ties with my family members, friends. I'm now managing life where I'm not supposed to.

**Jacob:** When our houses were burnt, we escaped into the bush and stayed there for many days, made thatch roof houses to live in them, thinking we were safe, the military again came looking for people and we flea again further into the Forest for our dear lives.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Jacob:** I escaped into the bush with my family as there was no more shelter for us.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Jacob:** My children had to miss that academic year as schools just automatically closed down and our properties were all burnt down.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Jacob:** I definitely had to move with my family.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Jacob:** As the war affected everyone, most of my family members equally escaped for their dear lives.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive? Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Jacob:** Where I'm now, the accommodation is not good as the house is overcrowded, feeding is difficult and the rents are high.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Jacob:** I don't have access into my house as the threats towards Teachers is still high, so being a teacher, my life is at risk if I move to the village regularly.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war. What can you tell the world about war?

**Jacob:** War is normally not good as it causes displacements, destruction, killings and untold sufferings.

## **Alfred's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good morning. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Alfred:** When the crises started, they were threatening us in school, by the separatist fighters and since the pupils were afraid of coming to school, the manager of schools stopped our salary. My children were stranded and the one in form four got pregnant because of truancy due to the crisis. A lot of fire exchange around my residence made me to be very afraid and I sorted for ways to leave with my family to the West Region. We had to trek for long before boarding a car the separatists never wanted any car or bike movements.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Alfred:** This War has affected me financially as I'm now renting, struggling to pay the fees for my children as formerly, Plan Cameroon use to pay the fees but now, that benefit is no more. Presently, I cultivate very little land which I'm renting unlike in the village where land was in abundance.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Alfred:** Although with the heavy gun firing, I had never escaped but my wife escaped with the children to the bush when it became worst, and I had left to search for a new home in the west



region. They stayed in farm houses for long and I finally took them to the safer areas.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Alfred:** I actually moved with my family and children. When we were leaving, we trekked for long, over 15km.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Alfred:** My children missed the academic Year from schooling as schools were automatically closed.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Alfred:** Some of my family members escaped, mostly the youths as all of them were in danger.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive? Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Alfred:** In my newly acquired location, I'm not comfortable with my accommodation, this is because I don't have farms, I lack finances and I'm renting a house which is very expensive.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Alfred:** Totally no, I can't move to my house, as the situation back home is still precarious and teachers are threatened every day.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war. What can you tell the world about war?

**Alfred:** From every indication, war is not good, as it displaces people, family members, friends, destroys properties, make you not to have access into your property, and there's a lot of killings.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much Clement for sharing your story with us. We wish you and your family all the best.

## **Clement's Story**

**Clement:** At the start of the crisis, schools were not functioning and people were being killed and I had to leave to sort for refuge in a good safer area. There was a lot of cross fire between separatist and the military regularly, and more to that, my business place was destroyed and looted.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Clement:** My capital is no more, I have no food for the children, I'm now on rents and have no enough finances. I'm now jobless, already a stable business man relegated to a farmer, renting farms which are not even fertile. I'm even frustrated as I'm now a disconnected man, I've even lost my family ties.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Clement:** I've escaped into the bush many times with my family. This was really for safety reasons. We use to sleep under trees and stones.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Clement:** I escaped with all my family members and children. We used to trek for about 4km to safety. It was not easy but there was no choice.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Clement:** My children had to miss the academic Year at the start of the crises.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Clement:** Some of my family members equally escaped as the killings were too high.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive?

Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Clement:** I'm just coping up timidly as life is very expensive to me, and transportation of food from the village to where I'm now is very expensive and difficult. Equally, the fees of my children is very expensive and to cope, only family members support me. I've no farm where I'm living.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Clement:** I have access to my home, although I don't live in the village anymore.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war.

What can you tell the world about war?

**Clement:** War is not good, because it has bad challenges like losing business contact, live in foreign areas, loose contacts with family members, friends etc.

**Interviewer:** Thanks immensely Clement, for sharing your story with us. We pray that the war should come to an end.

## **Terence's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good morning. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Terence:** At the start of the War, I had to leave immediately with my family as schools were closed down automatically. Insecurity was too high and this equally accounted for my early departure. The daily killings were horrible and scared me.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Terence:** The war had greatly affected me financially as my business shop was destroyed, my health deteriorated as I moved from a cold climate to a very hot climate zone and this made I myself and the children to be very sick. I'm equally separated from my family members, so Social ties are broken. My farms had been abandoned and my houses had dilapidated.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Terence:** I escaped into the bush many times as life was so difficult and at times we use to trek for many kilometers into hiding.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Terence:** I had to leave with my family including my children because of the danger I faced.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Terence:** In actual fact, my children never missed an academic Year as we left immediately at the start of the crises.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Terence:** Some of my family members equally escaped from the war. After sometime, I had to bring my grandmother to the West Region as she was lonely with nobody to take care of her back in the village.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive? Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Terence:** I'm trying to push life on by riding a bike so as to sustain my family since my business had crumbled. I'm not comfortable where I live as the climate is not conducive, equally I don't feel homely and I lack friends too.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Terence:** I have access to my home but I can't live there because of insecurity.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war. What can you tell the world about war?

**Terence:** War is generally very bad as it leads to affliction, pain, difficulties, poverty and loss of loved ones.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much Terence for sharing this sad story with us. May you and your family find the comfort that you while you sojourn here.

## **Eugene's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good morning. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Eugene:** I was tortured by both Warring factions, the military and the separatist. I don't know whether it was the Baptist institution I was working in or not, but the fact is that the danger on me was too high. I was equally attacked by assailants on the 20th of May 2021, and I was shot on my left hand by unknown gun men. Then finally before I left, I was kidnapped by separatist for 3 days and I paid the sum of 280,000 frs CFA. After then, my entire family was threatened and I had to leave for safer areas.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Eugene:** The war has dealt me a terrible blow by sending me away from my entire family and I'm equally traumatized. I was obliged to relocate to the West Region where I have difficulties in rents and food acquisition for my family. Life is hard on me here.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

I escaped into the bush for safety for more than three times and stayed there for about a week each time we escaped. We use to trek for about three kilometers to reach there.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Eugene:** When I was leaving, I left with my entire family as all my children were at risk.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Eugene:** My children had to miss two academic years due to the abrupt ending of the schooling in the Anglophone zone.

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Eugene:** Some of my family members equally escaped from the war as their lives were equally in danger.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive? Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Eugene:** I'm not comfortable where I live as I'm on rents, and the space is small.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Eugene:** I can't go back home as my compound is under custody as separatists are surveying the area.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war. What can you tell the world about war?

**Eugene:** War is generally very bad as any difference needs dialogue and not gun firing exchange which has no solution.



## **Emmanuel's Story**

**Interviewer:** Good morning. I understand that you're not a native of this place. You're here as an IDP, can you please tell us your story? How did you find yourself here? What were the circumstances that led to your having to quit your home or village?

**Emmanuel:** At the start of the crises, I was threatened to death, my property was destroyed and I left with my family. My houses were ransacked and my property stolen. I had many times that we escaped to the bush, and I paid ransom World hundreds of thousands of francs CFA, to bail the life of my family. The crops in my farms were illegally exploited like one hectare of Sugar cane all harvested, palm nuts harvested, goats stolen, and I'm now in agony. My houses had dilapidated due to the non - occupation nature of the houses. We stayed at times in open air or under sticks in the bushes after trekking for long distances.

**Interviewer:** How has the war affected you as an individual with respect to your dignity, career, and livelihood?

**Emmanuel:** The war has greatly devastated my life as I'm now in financial difficulties. I have many problems because I don't have a good source of income and I face great difficulties in educating my children. I'm now on rents and to pay the rents, it's really cumbersome to me. Equally, I've no good drinking water source.

**Interviewer:** I learned that some people used to have to escape and stay in the bushes for days with no shelter. Did such a thing ever happen to you? Can you share it with us?

**Emmanuel:** I escaped into the bush many times with my children for safety. This was when I was threatened by the separatist and I had to pay a ransom for our lives. At times, we trekked for long to safer areas.

**Interviewer:** Did you move with your family? Wife and children?

**Emmanuel:** I actually moved with all my family, my wife and the children. Upon leaving, we had to trek for a long distance before boarding a car

**Interviewer:** What about your other relations? Have they too been displaced?

**Emmanuel:** Some of my relations equally escaped from the war as nearly everybody in the village was in danger.

**Interviewer:** Did your kids stay away from school?

**Emmanuel:** My children missed four academic years because schools stopped automatically and I had no means to transfer them.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping here? Is your accommodation comfortable? Expensive? Overcrowded with other IDPs?

**Emmanuel:** I'm only struggling to survive as I only do part time blue cola jobs for a living. Another worst thing around where I live now is the high prevalence rate of malaria and other illnesses which makes life difficult. The accommodation is not really satisfactory as the house I rent is still uncompleted.

**Interviewer:** Do you have access to your home in the village?

**Emmanuel:** I don't have access into my house as my life was threatened, so I can't move to the village freely like in the past.

**Interviewer:** What would you say about war in general? Currently Ukraine is undergoing war. What can you tell the world about war?

**Emmanuel:** War is a very bad because it destroys lives, homes, education, properties, finances and social ties.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much Emmanuel for taking the courage to share your story with us. We pray that the crisis will come to an end and that you can return to your village.

# PART II

## *VOICES IN THE STORM: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CREATIVE WRITING AROUND THE WAR*

### **List of Contributors**

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Berita Fomo: WHAT A WORLD

Brandon Aye: DISREGARDED FIRE

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Brandon Chefor: WHY SHOULD I STAY AT HOME

Blessing Fotsop: RESULTS OF THE WAR

Clarine Songning: WHY ARE YOU SO FAR AWAY LORD

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Elijah Asobo Tazeh: HOME SWEET HOME: I LOVE MY BAMENDA

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Nchah Lydien Ntang: THE TRIUMPHANT SOUND

Nyuyki Sandra Sulareng: WAR WAR WAR

Nyuysemo Yaya Sunjo: CRISIS IN OUR NATION

Shiri Precious Achidie: BELIEVING IN TOMORROW

IN THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

SOLITUDE

Manyong Elizabeth Andong: LOOKING INTO CHANGE

CHILD'S CRY (Anonymous)

About the Authors

## INTRODUCTION

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquility.

(William Wordsworth)

There is an age-long African proverb which states that when an old person cries, scars are seen in the faces of the young. The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, a country situated in Central Africa has pulled on for close to a decade now and there seems to be no respite as long as the problems that sparked up the Crisis have not been looked into. Everyone, big and small as well as babies that were not yet conceived when the crisis started in 2016 have felt the pangs of the ugly teeth of the social and political problem. Families have lost not only their properties, homes, sources of livelihoods, but have also lost loved ones; fathers, mothers, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, grandparents, friends, colleagues, neighbours, classmates and much more. It is a heart jarring situation that keeps driving endless screws into the psyche and hearts of the people. The ordeal of the children and youths is even more appalling as most of them have lost their rights to education and proper health and parental care.

The trauma in little children and the rest of the population is growing at an alarming rate as they hear gunshots at any moment, see armored cars and war machine guns parading the streets and their villages. The sight of the slain and the pools of blood spilled in the regions almost every day is psychologically traumatizing and maddening. In a situation like this, the rights of the people are violated and children are exposed to sights that are terrifying. The fear which the

Crisis had brought to bear on children and youths is crystalizing. It will take years after the crisis end to heal the wounds that people have incurred from the war.

Everyone has a story to tell about the Anglophone Crisis and this anthology was initiated in a bit to get the opinions of the youths and some adults in the area of creative writing. Art is a means by which people purge their emotions, be it positive or negative emotions. It gives one an avenue of expression and in so doing becomes a sort of healing, a therapy, for telling it heals.

In this anthology, the contributors have expressed themselves through poetry, prose and drama which are three genres of written literature. In these pieces of creative expressions, the authors lay bare their agony, their loss, their fears, lamentations, castigating the situation at hand and advocating for a change. Some of the poets however, are not completely pessimistic about the crisis, they hope that someday peace and normalcy will return to the Anglophone Regions of the country. Other works capture the interminable lockdowns commonly known in the regions as “ghost towns” and the struggle of the people during these lockdown periods.

The anthology is not a complete presentation of what has happened and continues to happen in this war-torn area of the country, there is still much more that words cannot be enough to express. This work, is therefore a window through which part of the negative experiences of the people living in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon are wallowing in. There is still much more that may never be told.

Geraldine Sinyuy, PhD  
Bamenda, Cameroon

Geraldine Sinyuy

## **VOICES IN THE STORM**

It is a horrific and stormy night in our city,

Storms of the war times

Erupting buildings with bombs

Uprooting lives from their fountains

Breaking young branches from the arms of nursing mothers

It is a stormy night

The monster has broken loose from the jungle

Gunshots crisscrossing the city square

Midday turns into midnight

Wails of babies fried in hot oil by the heartless soldiers

Sssshhhhp

Four months old baby shot dead by a heartless soldier

Chills fill our entire bodies,

Why do they take life so cheap?

Oh God, when will the storm cease to blow over our city?

What about that boy who was shot in the groins in 2017?

Did he survive?



How many have been buried in our land oh Lord?

Show me the home of the inventor of guns

Show me the home of the fabricator of life bullets.

Oh that these will stop to exist!

Oh that God will shun man from such knowledge that fabricates deadly things

Ah ah ah ah. another cry again from the corner of the street.

How long shall children stay away from school?

How long shall we endure the lock downs?

How long shall ghost towns be?

How long shall terror overwhelm our region?

Ooh Lord, come to our aid.

The earth complains of being watered with the blood of innocent souls,

Have the rains stopped falling?

Why is there so much destruction in the city?

Why can't the soldiers put down their weapons?

Oh you soldiers, please put down your weapons

And walk the streets with love for one another.

Let there be laughter again in the cities and villages,

Let children freely go to school,

Let there be children playing again in the moon light,

Let there be music again in the streets.

Let love reign.

Let the storms of war stop raging.

Ajah Gift Ayangwo

### **MY WICKED WORLD**

I was scared as I heard a fearful noise,

Being confused in the forest because,

My parents and siblings were nowhere to be found,

As the armed men flew above my head

On trees with dangerous weapons.

I was scared as I saw dead bodies spattered

Around me in the forest

As they were covered with the red liquid I hate

To see,

While some were half covered with earth.

I was scared when I saw the copter flying

Above my head,

Slanging from corner to corner,

Shredding caps as it took away the lives of my loved ones.

Oh! What a tremendous and horror day

I have ever seen

There was snug,

Lord send a little rain to wipe away this evil

From our world,

And save us from this darkness.

Berita Fomo

## **WHAT A WORLD**

It has come and killed

I have seen and heard

People have lost and schools destroyed

Oh! What a world

We can't be placid anymore

For the world is no longer beckoning

Because it is filled with a lot of enmity

For we can't do our festoon and abodes anymore

for the world is filled with groans!

Oh! What a world

People have become serpents

For the land has lost its foliage

For people have become gnarled to one another

For the people have become like hinds

Oh! What a world

For the head can't give eloquent messages

So the world has become a gloomy place for humans

For everyone now bullies at each other

For the world has been spattered in silence

But people still invoke the head to help them

Oh! What a world.

Brandon Aye

## **DISREGARDED FIRE**

It started small – the fire

And appeasable was it ire

But the main firefighters did less

Assuming it deserved no serious attention

Gradually it spread

To the thirteen households

Still there was no urgency

Worried, the households decided

To use peace plants to call for more attention

But oxygen they turned out to be

And now clothed in misery we are

Stifled by the ubiquitous smell of blood

Mournfully watching thousands of graves

Forlornly trying to count the displaced

Bewilderingly standing outside locked classrooms

Wretchedly thinking about crumbled businesses

Helplessly staring at butchered normalcy

## **OUR DAILY BREAD**

The things we only heard of

Or saw on news channels

Now we experience

On daily basis

Leaving the house

only to be received by a world of mistrust

And unsure of returning

As abduction and stray balls are ever lurking

Green liveries and big green vehicles

precipitating trepidation

Ghost towns ever ready to deepen the despair

Sounds from far and near



Greased with terror, with hate

With hostility, with heartlessness

With self-centredness

And whenever there is silence

It is a petrifying one

No sign of things getting better soon

As the belligerents are not willing

to wrap their arms around the needful;

compromise

## **OUR SPIRIT OF INGRATITUDE EXPOSED**

Before late 2016

There was an iota of peace

But for granted we took it

Never did we celebrate

This iota of peace

Now it is no more

And no idea when it's returning

Did we give thanks

for being able to go anywhere without horror following us?

for being able to go about our affairs without interruption?

When carnage appeared

We said,

Let us have a taste

We said,

How is it like to live in South Sudan, Syria, Yemen...

We said,

Let us have a taste of agony and disorder and destruction

Brandon Chefor

## **WHY SHOULD I STAY AT HOME**

Why should I stay at home

When the blood running in my veins is as dry as the desert,

When men have become women,

When hope is the last option in life,

Why should I stay at home,

Where the cry of a baby is useless,

Where wickedness is the best option against children,

Where mothers only pray to God to give them strength to dig graves

Why should I stay at home,

When my eye balls are dazzle rather than their usual colour,

When peace is like the mistake made by Eve,

When brave men have become disable women?

Blessing Fotsop

## **RESULTS OF THE WAR**

In that fateful year 2016 when the war started, there was a lot of killing and disorder where many houses, schools and hospitals were burnt down. As a result, to that, many children and families became frustrated in such that some even ran and stayed in the bush for safety. Since all were burnt down, all children became frustrated where teenagers got pregnant and some even died in the cause of birth and abortion. Also, as hospitals were all burnt down, some people were injured in the cause of running and some who were bitten by flies died because there was no hospital to treat them. Some children or people who even managed to leave their homes to settle with some relatives to see if they could work to make life easy instead found out that life became harder, some who never had relatives where they ran to had to stay under bridges and roadsides and some even turned as beggars and refugees in other towns.

Most especially students who left their homes to school in other places did not find it easy. Even in the arms of their own relatives they were still maltreated because they had nowhere to go. More to that, the ones who left with uncles and aunties were maltreated a lot in such a way that some had to run away from home to become thieves and prostitutes or drug consumers on the streets because of frustration. Moreover, and those who left the country because life was better there became more frustrated than even those in the war, some of our sisters and brothers out there are being used as prostitutes and robbers because they wanted a place for safety, but everything has ended in a terrible way.

Clarine Songning

**WHY ARE YOU SO FAR AWAY LORD**

Why are you so far away Lord?

Why do you hide yourself when

We are in trouble?

The wicked are proud of their evil desire

The greedy curse and reject the Lord

In their pride they think that

God doesn't matter

The eyes are weak and tired of weeping

Then wake up my God and bring justice

Gather all the nations before you

Rule over them from on high

The lord judges the nations

Declare the righteous innocent O Most High

The unrighteous will prepare the deadly weapons

And shoot his flaming arrows

God where are you?

God where are you?

Arise Oh Lord and stand for your children

Arise oh God and fight for your country Cameroon

May they know peace and justice in your name.

Favour Bright

**TO THE CRISIS**

So many lives taken

So many eyes awaken

We pray for you to end

But surely you shall know no rest.

You've taken away our

Innocent brothers.

And even our mothers.

With all this crying and sorrow

How can we predict our tomorrow?

The only one we look to

Now is our one true father

Who holds all the might

And power

For only he holds the

Way, truth and the light

To all our wonders.



Elijah Asobo Tazeh

## **HOME SWEET HOME: I LOVE MY BAMENDA**

My name is **ASOBO TAZEH ELIJAH**. I was born in *Bamenda*, a town in the North West Region of *Cameroon*. It is an English-speaking town. We are called the *Grass field people*; oh, what a sweet name, this name reminds me of who I am and to always be proud of myself.

I've grown up to know Bamenda as one of the most peaceful towns in Cameroon, I have known the people of Bamenda as hard-working sons and daughters who work extremely hard for their future and for the future of their town (Bamenda).

In 2016 when the crisis(war) broke out in BAMENDA, everything changed till today. The crisis affected me in many ways. My first year of secondary school in my home town Bamenda was the year the crisis started, and you can imagine how it interrupted my education. I can remember not going to school for three years after our teachers were flogged right in front of us and others got their fingers chopped off. My dream of one day becoming a pilot started falling like candle wax, I can remember a day when I got involved in a cross fire with the two parties and that day, I thought that was the end of my life but I thank GOD who saved me that day, I can also remember leaving the house in the morning going to the market, without even reaching the market, I found myself running back home like I was being chased by a lion, meanwhile I was running away from another human being like me.

As if that is not enough, on December 27, 2018, after celebrating Christmas together with my elder brother, he was shot on his way back from the market. But all thanks to God, he survived after being rushed to the hospital by a good Samaritan who found him helpless on the ground.

You can imagine how that hurt when I first got the news, thinking that my brother with whom I shared the same meal with in the morning before leaving the house, is gone for ever.

Growing up, I learned that the MOTTO of our country is *peace, work, father land*. My question is, is peace so expensive that we cannot afford, is love so invisible that we can't see? Most of all our road junctions that I know as places used for youth gathering has now become firing squads where people are being killed. Some have equally become a dumping ground where after killing people, they are being dumped. I say again, is peace so expensive that we cannot afford? Any ways, this is where I was born, this is my home. No matter what, I still love my BAMENDA home sweet home. We live and hope for a better tomorrow.

HOME SWEET HOME,



I LOVE MY BAMENDA.

Gaelle Essimbi

### **A QUIET AND PEACEFUL WORLD**

Such a dynamic glamorous view

Then a sudden change in the view

A world which was once pure

Has suddenly been changed

By people we call human beings

Killings and destruction began as a joke,

Lives and property being destroyed,

Gradually, the world's population decreases,

Like trees that are being cut down for wood,

Oh!! What a misfortune to this world,

Not everyone sees it as crime,

But rather they see it as a job

As a daily process,

People perish every day,

For lives which were not meant to be lost,

But still nothing can change

Oh!! What a pity to this world

Children idling around like sheep searching for a shepherd.

Like little cats searching for winter's meal,

Oh!! Why all this misery?

Where the poor is being separated from the rich,

Where lives are lost just by the commands of higher grounds,

Who live wealthy lives and allow the lower ground

To be killed daily over and over again.

Not having in mind that they were once like them,

Before being promoted by other higher grounds.

Why can't they be sceptic about the killing of innocent people?

Why can't they bring back the world which was once pure?

Why all this killing of people and destruction of property?

Must the wicked be full of violence and hatred?

Must children remain homeless and stray like pets?

How long will children be deprived of their only key to success?

Why can't this world be as it was in the beginning?

Where the birds used to light up early morning

With their sweet chirps

Where people were free to get out of their houses without

Having negative thoughts

Where the country used to be united

In peace and harmony

Oh!1 This cruel world

Kahvoma Bridget Gwanbobga

### **CYCLE OF THINGS**

The rainy season followed the dry

Dogs barked, goats bleated,

Hens and roosters scuttled up and down the road

Birds flitted leisurely like butter flies from one tree to the other

We moved about in the unhurried way of the butterflies,

As if the breeze was sweet,

The sun on our skin was a caress,

Oh! How life was before the crisis,

Our lives tamely moving forward

The crisis barged and instilled itself in 2016,

The regular army began pulsing with the

ruckus of armored cars and shelling machines,

Men on the other side slinging dane guns across their shoulders,

Chantings could be heard at different times,

Loud voices pouring out like libations from their mouths:

"Amba must be free".

We glanced flirtingly at all angles,

No one to help

Peaceful protests turned bloody — The struggle continues!

## **HOW DID WE GET HERE?**

Like a big joke it all started,  
Teachers and layers grieved to the core,  
They channeled their pleas and supplications,  
Their grievances turned out to be the lot of many.

The peaceful protest was hijacked,  
Turned to a blood battle  
Thousands buried and many mourning in self-exile.  
New appellations given to the people of same ancestry,  
Are they just internally displaced person's?  
No,  
There's more to the appellations  
We bathe in the frustration  
How did we get here?  
How do we go back to the good old days?

## **HIDE UNDER THE TABLE**

Father drew the metal doors shut: " hide under the table";  
Blanket of darkness fell over us,  
He crouched beside me, panting,

Scuttle of feet heard outside  
Smash of bottles, the piercing cries,  
The chants of rioters and the screech of machetes on the tarred road.  
A metal club slammed on our door; I feed on myself.  
Metal warred with metal  
The air grows hot as things are set on fire,  
Father's Peugeot pick up on fire  
The same devastation is strewn all around  
Shop fronts smashed and looted.  
The air, thick with smell, the familiar  
smell that hangs heavy with the roasting off of goat's hair,  
Across the road, the charred remains of a man.



Maivah Namekong

## **EVIL WAR**

How evil you are

Causing agony to people

Taking away vitality from brothers and sitters

How cruel are you?

You make them relocate to areas of uncertainty

To a place where their whereabouts are unnoticed,

You bring wars to the eyes of little children

Who mourn for the loss of their parents you've taken

Oh war!!

Why can't you be as gentle as the morning breeze?

Why can't you be more like peace?

Why can't you stop all this hatred?

Oh war!

Margaret Chi

**FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN (A short play)**

*[At a neighbourhood in Bamenda. Two neighbours conversing.]*

**Aunty Ivy:** Good morning mami boy

**Mami boy:** Good morning oh aunty Ivy, how was your night?

**Aunty Ivy:** Ah my sister, for seeing another day we thank God.

**Mami boy:** That's right. I can see you are ready to go to your jobsite

**Aunty Ivy:** Yes, I am. Isn't pa boy ready yet? I'll like for him to give me a lift. You know how frustrating it is to get a taxi especially on Tuesday mornings.

**Mami boy:** He got up very early and prepared as usual but I begged him to hold on a little.

**Aunty Ivy:** (worried) hope there's no problem

**Mami boy:** I hope so too. The gunshots from last night really scared me so I think he should ensure it's safe for him before leaving the house. You know that ever since my shop was burnt into ashes, his taxi has been our only source of livelihood.

**Aunty Ivy:** (surprised) There were gunshots last night?

**Mami boy:** Wait oh, don't tell me you didn't hear anything!

**Aunty Ivy:** I slept like a log of wood yesterday. I came back very tired, the customers I had yesterday were hard nut to crack. Almost all of them bargained prices, even the price for maggie. It really drained me such that the embrace of my bed completely consumed me.

**Mami boy:** Oh dear! I understand, so sorry about that.

**Aunty Ivy:** Thank you. So tell me about the gunshots.

**Mami boy:** My sister, *I cannot talk thing wey I no know*. It started at about 8pm and lasted for almost an hour, that's all I know.

**Aunty Ivy :**(Thoughtfully) This is serious!

**Mami boy:** Honestly when I saw you prepared to go I thought you were aware of it but wanted to go and find out for yourself.

**Aunty Ivy:** Find what out? I beg oh I'm not going again. Let me inform my daughter, no school today.

**Mami boy:** Do you have someone in town whom you can call to verify?

**Aunty Ivy:** Yes, I have a friend who lives at Commercial Avenue. I will call her.

**Mami boy:** Okay. Please when you do keep us updated

**Aunty Ivy:** Alright.

*(She immediately gets her phone to make a call. It is only after the third ring that someone picks)*

**Aunty Ivy:** Allo sis.

**Voice:** Allo, good morning.

**Aunty Ivy:** Good morning, how was your night?

**Voice:** It was good and yours?

**Aunty Ivy:** Same here.

**Voice:** Sorry I missed your call earlier.

**Aunty Ivy:** Is it not you again, where did you throw your phone this time around?

**Voice:** Hahaha, don't mind me oh. I'll surely look for a bag and hang it on my neck to carry my phone wherever I go.

**Aunty Ivy:** I hear you ma. Have you visited the junction this morning?

**Voice:** **That's** actually where I went to when you called, I left my phone in the house.

**Aunty Ivy:** **So** how is everything, are vehicles circulating? Have shops been opened?

**Voice :** Skepticism has pervaded the air and the area looks like a haunted town with only few courageous enough to step out of the comfort of their homes. Only few vehicles are circulating. Shop owners are standing in front of their shops waiting for someone with a big heart to lead the way and open his/her shop first, at least company gives assurance. I guess their reaction is as a result of yesterday's gunshots.

**Aunty Ivy:** You are right.

**Voice:** So let's wait for 30 minutes I will go and check again then get back to you.

**Aunty Ivy:** That sounds good thanks sis, talk to you later.

(About an hour later, pa boy is going about his routine as a taxi driver, he has two passengers in his vehicle.)

**Passenger 1:** Chai! I dong stand for that place for almost one hour I no di see taxi

**Pa boy:** One hour? that means you comot since 8:am?

**Passenger 1:** Yes.

**Pa boy:** You self you try ya. You check say na which driver go hear that kind popcorn for yesterday then comot for sharp sharp morning time?

**Passenger 2:** I tell you my brother. Me self wey I di ever comot for 6:am I no for fit tryam today.

**Passenger 1:** But na really who be di shoot?

**Pa boy:** Hmmm my brother abeg no ask me thing wey I no fit answer you. No be na all we be di sleep time wey the thing be di go on?

**Passenger 2:** Askam oh

**They pass by someone standing by the road pointing to stop a taxi. PA boy halts but this person is willing to pay 150frs instead of the usual 300frs fare Pa boy just sighs and takes off.**

**Pa boy:** I no know why some people di ever like for wicked so. How person go want pay only half of e fare? not even 250frs oh but 150frs saah! no be wickedness say na weti?

**Passenger 1:** Maybe na all that wey e get

**Pa boy:** e go remain for there with that e 150frs. Fuel di only craze na craze, control too no di leave man rest but when driver want complain passenger them no di gree hear.

**Passenger 2:** papa na say we no get ya. E strong too for we passengers wa side, for see money for this town now so na connection.

**Pa boy:** No side no better, we puttam all for God e hand.

**Passenger 1:** Na the highest that.

**THE END.**

## **GOOD OLD DAYS**

I yearn for those days when our streets

Were garnished with beautiful flowers

Not lifeless bodies.

When the aroma of freshly fried puff-puff

And not tear gas filled the morning air.

When children in their uniforms shone like blossoming roses

as they exulted to school.

I dread these unfolding days when students dress in assorted

With books in shopping bags.

I shudder at the sight of these days when babies

Have heard more gunshots than lullabies.

Perhaps nature gave us a sign of this foreboding

But we were too blind too see.

Perhaps the answers are under our noses

But the lenses of egoism we have worn have blurred our view.

The wind whispers a better tomorrow to my deafened ears.

The breeze swings hope of restitution

And engraves it on my shrunk heart.

Let my frail eyes be gleeful

Let my broken limbs be whole

Let my troubled mind feel his new air

As I wear the lenses of love and

Feast at the table of new beginnings.

### **SCENE OF CHAGRIN**

Hear that acute cry in the dark...

It is the voice of a weeping mother.

With a shredded heart, she gapes

At the fruits of her womb

Like withered vegetables,

They lay lifelessly

Before her wrinkled body.

Like the Menchum falls, her tears flow  
Down her furrowed face dropping on the carcasses.  
She refuses to be comforted,  
Her limbs are feeble; her heart is restless.  
In her tattered garment, she rolls on the floor  
Pleading for the wicked fellow, death, to take her also.

She would not live to see the ruins of her progeny.  
Her home is a deserted castle,  
Her eyes itch, sour water freefall as she yearns for her babies.  
How bogus time is, one moment it gives hope and the next  
It stops giving way for pain to ransack us.  
Bullets have pierced through her protective shell  
Into these fragile bodies laying waste in the dust.  
Her mind is encircled in this

### **I WEEP FOR BAMENDA**

How low my motherland has fallen!



A once mighty abode is now a ticking bomb.

Every moment I spend here,

My fragile heart races for fear of the unknown.

The good Samaritan Bamenda man

Has retreated into his shell,

Kindness now is futile.

For how long, I can't tell

But for now I will trust none

As I continue my narrow escapes.

After this ticking bomb explodes,

The dust will settle and there will be a rebirth.

Nchah Lydien Ntang

### **THE TRIUMPHANT SOUND**

It's early at dawn

And we are already at frown,

It's not a mystery of faith

But our hopes have longed faded off

Many yearn for a future change,

But the changes seem to be fading off

The sufferings which we have endured

Are a million times more than the cross of Jesus Christ

Millions of people die every day,

Not because it is their chosen season

And there is a doubt their souls will rest,

And oceans of prayers have reached him.

Nyuyki Sandra Sulareng

**WAR WAR WAR**

So much is happening

Our society is drowning

All because of war

We are suffering

Crying for peace

Seeking for justice

Living in bondage

Mourning our loved ones

Dying for what we know nothing about

We live like strangers in our country

Our country is covered up with blood

We are tired of living this way

What can be done to solve to this problem?

Forgiving one another

Try to make peace with our loved ones

So we can build a more developed county

We are tired of living this way

We need peace

We want peace

And we will fine peace

Nyuysemo Yaya Sunjo

**CRISIS IN OUR NATION**

Crisis crisis crisis

Oh great nation,

Two elephants fighting

But the grasses are suffering.

Our blessed country.

Of young people,

What led to this crisis?

Nothing is clarified for this crisis.

The grasses are crying for help

No one is coming to rescue

Blood everywhere

Why is this happening?

Oh good God

Please come to our need

For we are in pain

Say no to war

We need justice.

Shiri Precious Achidie

## **BELIEVING IN TOMORROW**

It is a Crises, it is a crisis,

An identity crisis that makes every heart tremble

A crisis that makes people scared of leaving their homes

A crisis that makes millions of thoughts run through,

Your mind by the sound of one gun shot.

But we will never stop believing in tomorrow.

It is a crisis

That makes us to play the stay awake game

With our hearts pounding in fear

Peeping each second of the time

Scared to take rest

But we will never stop believing in tomorrow

It crisis

That makes the innocent cry

And makes the guilty pay

Forgetting that judgement is for the Lord

But we will never stop believing in tomorrow.

It is a crisis

That makes us unable to distinguish correct from wrong

Because our hearts are weeping

And our minds confused

But we will never stop believing in tomorrow.

It a crisis

That instill fear in the heart of both the young and,

Old, but never forgot there is a future

And the future is always bright

Therefore, we should never stop believing in tomorrow.

### **IN THE MOMENT OF SILENCE**

After a brief warning sent by death

Not more than 7seconds he dwelt his path



Not long after I hear a sound

But not knowing exactly where it was found

Like the sound of an earthquake

It was frightening and taunting.

Again I heard a sound in my head

A scream in fact of AaAaAaAaAa

So I quickly rushed to my Apartment

To find out that everywhere was surrounded by men and women

They held me in my hands

And landed the big news

In their

last words they said

“A moment of silence”

## **SOLITUDE**

This is not by assertion

But life is in frustration

Dwelling more on assimilation

Why the discrimination

I mean between Anglophones and Francophones

Must we always be biased?

My psyche is telling me otherwise

But this is the step we have to take to be wise

This is my own motive

Neither being positive

So I say

A LITTLE SHOW OF LOVE WON'T HURT

Manyong Elizabeth Andong

**LOOKING INTO CHANGE**

And life is colour and warmth and light

Peace peace peace.

The fighting man shall from the sun

Take warmth. And live from the glowing earth;

Peace peace peace

All the bright company of heaven

Hold him in their high comradeship

Peace peace peace

Just a common word

Yet gold and silver

Cannot buy you peace

Peace peace peace.

Pride and power

Send you to tower

Soldiers and suns

Send you to sun

Truth and justice

And the fear of God

Bring you to us.

Peace peace peace.

### **THE SCARY AND FURY SOUND AGAIN**

Waking up again to the scary morning

When the only thing one hear are sounds of mourning

An optimistic feeling is that which everyone yields

But how can it be achieved presently in the Battle field

Many have travelled in fear and tears not knowing that

All that goes must come to pass like days and seasons.

The only song the air sings is the song of gunshots

Capturing the hearts and souls of innocent beings

Mothers, fathers, children are weeping for their loss

But quietly in echo 'cause they know the cause

Children living without certificates of education

Because they have been in the house for years with no education

People tie their fear in them to the point of fats.

Seven million people lose their lives in a day

Not because it is a season of May

Frankly speaking the level of fireworks left people in hypertension

And as a means not to succumb to the tension

They live in total quietness with no word utterance

The casualties are traumatizing

Accompanied with agonizing sounds

Worshipping and shouting for help to the God of the Jews

To perform one of his wondrous miracles

Knowing within he will despite the obstacles

Anonymous

**CHILD'S CRY**

It has happened

It has happened

I was born in to these

Innocent and ignorant

Yet, I now am wounded

Blood now flow like a stream

Sound of cry like music

Pains and hatred like daily food

Humans are in trouble

What a disastrous word

I ever, know, crisis

A hammer that scatters joy

A sword that shatters unity

A stick that whips

And never stops paining

Look, we are now the targets

Of the arrows of our siblings

Crisis oh crisis

You are the cause of motherless children

You are the cause of blood shed on the streets

You are the cause of less economical systems

You are the knife that

pieces but never stops.

Like the river Nile

You have washed us away

Like Pharos to the Hebrews

Have killed our brothers

Look I was born not for this

But instead of love, I saw hatred

Instead of unity, I saw division

Now that am lost

Like a lamb in the wood

I look up to God

The Alpha and Omega

And the finisher of our faith



## About the Authors

**Aye Brandon Kiven:** A member of Anglophone Cameroon Writers Association, and a Peace Advocate, **Aye Brandon Kiven** is a secondary school mathematics teacher. He was longlisted for the 2019 Commonwealth Short Story Prize.

**Ajah Gift Ayangwo** was born in Bamenda on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2005. She attended primary school at Government Primary School Akumalam from 2007-2013. She obtained her FS:C from the same institution in in 2013. After her Primary school education, Anyangwo enrolled into a Government Technical School Alabukam and due to circumstances beyond her control, she left the school and enrolled at GBHS Down Town Bamenda where is currently a Form Five student preparing for her Ordinary Level General Certificate of Education. She is an Arts student and is a member of the school's Journalism and Creative Writing Club. Her best subjects are Literature in English, Logic and economics.

**Banla Catherine Kinyuy** was born into the BANLA'S LOVING family in the year 2008. She hails from Bui Division and is currently a form four Science student of SMASA Nkwen, Bamenda. She is 14 years old and will be turning 15 in December 2023. She really loves singing and as a science student, she loves Biology as her first best subject. This poem is the first poem she has ever written.

**Berita Fomo** was born on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007 at St Blaise Hospital, Bamenda. She attended her primary school in Star Multipurpose School Bamenda. During her primary school years, she was best at mathematics. She obtained her first school leaving Certificate from the same school in and moved to the secondary school. She is currently a form five arts student preparing for her end of course GCE examinations. She is good at both mathematics and literature and is also a member of the school's Journalism and Creative Writing Club.

**Blessing Fotsop** was born on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007 and obtained her First School Leaving Certificate at Focimendi in 2015. She is currently a form four student in G B H S Down Town Bamenda, Cameroon.

**Brandon Chefor** Forsuh was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2006 in the North West Region of Cameroon in a village called Mendakwe where he grew up and attended Government School Ntoh. After completing his primary education, he went to Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bamendakwe for two years. When the crisis started in 2016, he dropped out of school and lived in the village for three years. After three years he went back to school and continued his education at Government Bilingual High School Down Town Bamenda where he obtained his Ordinary Level GCE in 2023. He is an arts student and is a member of the Journalism and Creative Writing Club. Brandon spends most of his time writing poems of lamentations as well as love poems. He also loves playing football.

**Chi Margaret Edum** is a native of Mbengkas village, Boyo Division, Fundong subdivision. She is currently following her BA in English at the University of Bamenda. She is a dynamic debater, public speaker, budding writer and poet. She is a volunteer with NGOs aimed at fighting gender-based violence and promoting peace, inclusiveness of people with disabilities and environmental conservation. She loves reading novels, travelling and meeting new people.

**Clarine Songning** is a Form Four student in Government Bilingual High School Down Town Bamenda.

**Eliano Djussi Djimo Miriam** was born on 06/08/2005. She devoted part of her life to entertain others. She is a holder of GCE ordinary level certificate and a member of the Government Bilingual High School Down Town Bamenda Journalism and Creative Writing Club.

**Elijah Asobo Tazeh** was born in *Bamenda*, a town in the North West Region of *Cameroon*. it is an English-speaking town.

**Favour Bright** was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. She is a Cameroonian. She has spent most of her life in Bamenda in the North West Region of Cameroon. She attended Horizon Primary School as a child and later on continued in Saint Michael's Academy of Science, Arts and Commerce in the year 2020. She loves singing and dancing and that keeps her happy and

less bored. She is currently fifteen years old and is a very smart and diligent student. Favour is a Form Four Science Student.

**Gaëlle Essimbi** was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2007 in the North West Region of Cameroon. She attended Oxford Bilingual Nursery and Primary School and later on moved to St. John the Baptist Nursery and Primary School Bign Mankon, Bamenda where she obtained her FSLC and a certificate in Religious studies. She is currently a form five secondary school student at GBHS Down Town Bamenda. She is presently acting as the School's Labour Prefect and a member of the school's Journalism and Creative Writing Club. She gets her inspiration from her family and loved ones. Besides, Gaëlle very a hard-working girl and is determined to perform better in academics as the time goes on. She is also preparing for her final exams, the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary level.

**Kahvoma Bridget Gwanbobga** hails from Bali Nyonga, North West Region of Cameroon. She completed from Higher Teachers Training College Bambili in 2016. She holds a Master's Degree in English and Commonwealth Literature from the University of Dschang. Presently, she is a Technical English Language teacher in GTC Mantum and takes keen interest in creative writing. She is a Cameroon GCE examiner and a member of ELTS-CAMELTA North West.

**Leopold Tensah** was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2009. He hails from the Boyo Division in the North West Region of Cameroon and is a form four student in Saint Micaheal Academy of

Science and Arts Nkwen, Bamenda. His aspiration as a student is to enter the field of engineering. He is 14 years old and loves to play football.

**Maivah Namekong** is a form student in Government Bilingual High School Down Town Bamenda. She is an arts student and is a member of the Journalism and Creative Writing Club.

**Manda Silas Sandamu** was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2001. He is from jeaffor, Ako sub division, Donga-Mauntung division, North West region of Cameroon. He went to dissimilar elementary schools but finally graduated from C.B.C primary school Chuku in Babanki 2012, he had his Ordinary level at GBHS Somie 2019, and Advance level at GBHS Bankim 2021; All in Adamawa Region. He is Currently pursuing a BA in English Language in the department of English, faculty of Arts, University of Bamenda. He consumes literary works and he took it upon himself to produce it for others to consume, in this regard, he writes short film scripts, poems and other write-ups, looking forward to publishing his first novel in due time and aiming high to be a great writer like John Nkemngong his role model in writing. Alongside writing, he is a debater, and plays local football.

**Manyong Elizabeth Andong** was born on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000, in Kumba, the South West Region of Cameroon. She obtained her primary education at St. Thomas Catholic School Kumba, where she got her First School Leaving Certificate. From there she went to secondary school and obtained her General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level in 2020. She is currently an

Upper Sixth student in Government Bilingual High School Down Town Bamenda where she is preparing to write her GCE Advance Level come June 2023. She is studying Literature in English, History and English Language. She wants to become a playwright in the future. She draws her inspiration from John Keats.

**Nchah Lydien Ntang** was born in Akeh-Fundong Sub Division, North West Region of Cameroon, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2003. She has her First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) from Government School (GS) Akeh. After her FSLC, she was admitted into Government High School (GHS) Akeh where she schooled till 2016, when the Anglophone crisis started. By then she was in Form four. She dropped out of school in 2016 due to the crisis and decided to learn hair dressing and became a hair dresser in 2018. There after she migrated to Mutegene in the South West Region of the country 2020 where she continued her education at REPES Mutegene. She obtained her General Certificate of Education from the same school in 2021, passing in seven papers. From there she came back to Bamenda in the North West Region where she got admission into Lower Sixth Arts at Government Bilingual High School, (GBHS) Down Town Bamenda. She is currently an Upper Sixth Arts student in the same school. She loves creative writing and is a member of the School's Journalism and Creative Writing Club. From her ideas towards humanity, she has always preferred equality in all aspects of life.

**Nyuyki Sandra Suilareng** hails from Bui Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. She is currently a Form Four Arts student at Government Bilingual High School Down Town Bamenda. She loves creative writing, reading, dancing and designing.

**Nyuysemo Yaya Sunjo** was born on the 28 of April 2010, typical Bansa, she was born in Kumbo from Buluf, she obtained G.C.E(government common entrance and First school living certificate in 2021 in Maxnes bilingual pre-nursery nursery and primary school mile four Nkwen Bamenda. She is currently in secondary school in G.B.H.S Bayelle Nkwen in form two special bilingual series.