

Dynamics and Development Impact of Catholic Education Services in the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon, 1912-2020

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Abstract: *Implanted as a faith-based organization, time and circumstances presented realities that forced the Roman Catholic Mission in the Bamenda Grasslands to consider engaging full-time education services. This reverberated into the creation of primary, secondary and tertiary education facilities across the Bamenda Grasslands with far-reaching implications on local development. Drawing from a wide range of sources including primary, secondary and tertiary data, this paper argues that the Roman Catholic Mission's involvement in education services removed the church from a position of apparent diffidence to veritable partners in development of the region. Consequently, the RCM contributed significantly in job-creation, infrastructural development and the boosting of the economy of its host communities. The paper thus recommends that with greater financial and human assistance, the RCM's potential to contribute to development would be increased for the handling of the development puzzle of this region.*

Key words: *Roman Catholic Mission, Development, Dynamism, Impact, Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon.*

I. Introduction

The Catholic education services in the Bamenda Grasslands have contributed significantly to the development of the region. Emerging from a background of focusing on elementary education services, the RCM soon jumped to the reality of evolving to secondary education facilities and more recently, higher education. At each level of change, the contribution of these educational facilities to local development is evident. This paper therefore seeks to argue that Catholic education, in its various dimensions, was a catalyst of development in the Bamenda Grasslands region of Cameroon.

II. Early beginnings and expansion

During the colonial era, the RCM focused on the creation of elementary institutions of learning and teacher training colleges. These schools by virtue of their existence rekindled the spirit of the people towards the pursuance of education at all levels. This was noted by the church authorities as upon completion from primary schools, most graduates enthusiastic to gain more knowledge, took off for other regions away from the Bamenda Grasslands to continue secondary school studies. The most common destination for this purpose was Sasse in Buea where the lone Catholic Secondary School created in 1939 existed. The influx of students from the Bamenda Grasslands that enrolled at the Saint Joseph's College, Sasse became a matter of concern to church authorities in the Apostolic Prefecture of Buea.

The Catholic Church authorities of the Mill Hill Missionary society that were in charge of the church in British Southern Cameroons, mindful of the above worry, decided to take up the challenge to create secondary schools in the Bamenda Grasslands. But this idea was not easy to be realized, mindful of the need for more teachers after the territory reunified with the Republic of Cameroon (Former French Cameroon). The birth of Catholic Secondary schools in the Bamenda Grasslands started with the creation of Sacred Heart College (SHC) Mankon in 1961. The school that was opened in strides of Saint Joseph's College Sasse, as the second boys-exclusive Catholic Secondary School in Anglophone Cameroon, was placed under the management of the Marist Brothers who had as one of their vocation duties, the promotion of education. Two years after SHC was created, the Catholic church mindful of the need to equate treatments of both sex, a girls-exclusive college was created in Mankon with the name Our Lady of Lourdes College (OLLC). This college became the second girls-exclusive secondary school in the country after the Queen of the Rosary College, Okoyong- Mamfe.

The creation of these colleges within the Mankon zone, led to the influx of primary school graduates from all the corners of the Bamenda Grasslands and beyond. These colleges became veritable places to be for those who wished to continue studies after completing primary school. Unable to contain the number of students seeking admission year-in year-out, the Catholic Church authorities in the region then sought for the creation of additional colleges in other parts of the region. This was intended to not only decongest the two

colleges in Mankon, but also to ensure that the benefits of development brought into any area through the existence of educational establishments were felt in all other communities in the Bamenda Grassfields. With this in mind and after due consultations and feasibility study of some areas within the region, additional Catholic Colleges were created, with focus more on mixed rather than single-sex colleges. In October 1963, Saint Bede's College Ashing-Kom went operational and later in January 1964, Saint Augustine's College, Nso was created. Both institutions were created, thanks to grants that the Catholic Church in the region received from the Dutch Government through a Dutch Catholic Organisation called CEBEMO. The grants enabled the construction of structures for the colleges which included Classrooms, dormitories and staff quarters for teachers.

III. Case Examples of Catholic Education Services in the Bamenda Grasslands

In the Archdiocese of Bamenda, Catholic secondary schools were hailed for excellent academic output, in terms of producing results, both at the local, regional and national levels. Prior to the birth of the Diocese of Bamenda in 1970, three colleges had gone operational within its jurisdiction, including Sacred Heart College (SHC) Mankon created in 1961, Our Lady of Lourdes College (OLLC) Mankon, opened in 1963, and Saint Bede's College (SBC) Ashing-Kom that opened its doors in 1963. After the creation of SHC and OLLC, the Catholic Church authorities in the Bamenda Grassfields embarked on the creation of Secondary schools in other parts of the region. By so doing, they had as intention, to bring education closest to the people and to enable them become more knowledgeable towards contributing to their welfare and the growth and development of their communities.

IV. Sacred Heart College (SHC) Mankon

Sacred Heart College Mankon was the first Catholic Secondary institution that went operational in the Bamenda Grassfields. It began as an male-exclusive institution and was founded in 1961 by the Mill Hill Missionaries. The first class of 30 odd boys was started by Rev Fr .Thomas Mulligan at the campus of Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) School Big Mankon. This was as due to the lack of appropriate infrastructure. The main reason for which the school was created by the Mill Hill Missionary Fathers, was to cater for boys from Bamenda who passed the entrance examination into the Saint Joseph,s College Sasse Buea, but for one or two difficulties encountered, could not make it to Buea. In this regard, Sacred Heart College Mankon therefore played an out of station role of the Sasse College in the Bamenda Grasslands region. And like was the case with the Sasse College that was christened after the patron Saint of the Mill Hill Missionaries, Sacred Heart College Mankongave the boys a sound moral, intellectual and practical lessons, adapted to the needs of Cameroonians, and thus helped them to become useful.

The college operated as a first cycle institution from creation up to 1978 when a high school science section went functional. The second cycle Arts department of the college went operational in 1979. *SaHeCo*, as Sacred Heart College is fondly called by many, has repeatedly performed exceptionally in all fields of human development, very often it achieved a perfect score of 100 % in both the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) examinations, Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Due to astute training in terms of morals, students and ex- students have both developed a God fearing and morally upright attitude as noticed wherever they live.

V. Our Lady of Lourdes College (OLLC), Mankon

Our Lady of Lourdes College, previously known as Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School Mankon is a Roman Catholic, all girls Secondary School .located in Mankon-Bamenda in the North West Region of Cameroon. This college which was the first all-girls college created in the region by the Roman Catholic Church, was founded in 1963 by Rev. Fr. Nabben who was Parish Priest of the Saint Joseph's Parish Mankon at the time (which is today the Mankon Cathedral Parish). Encouraged by the existence of a Boys college in the region at the time, and mindful of the fact that Primary School going statistics at the time showed more girls in attendance than the boys, Fr. Nabben thought it necessary to come up with an all-girls institution in his parish, so as to give the opportunity to those girls who wanted to continue education after the Primary level, to continue. He wanted to offer education for girls, especially at a period when female education was not a priority.

Though with the Chief Shepherd in the Archdiocese as Proprietor, the management of the college since creation, was entrusted to the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary. The school is reputed for excellent results both at the religious and public examination sessions. It produced some of the best results in the General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced Levels in Cameroon. Our Lady of Lourdes College Mankon is the lone Catholic girls boarding college in the North West Region.

The school opened its doors on October 15th 1963. The creation of the Our Lady of Lourdes College, joined the Queen of the Rosary College, Okoyong-Mamfe and the Saker Baptist College Victoria, as the only all girls secondary schools in Cameroon. The High School section went operational in 2005 with Rev Sr Eucharia Ndidi serving at the time as College Principal. The creation of a high school section, caused a change of the school's name, to Our Lady of Lourdes College.

The college had a vibrant Ex- Students Association with branches spread all over the world. The Ex-students or Alumni is known as the Lourdes Ex-Students Association, abbreviated LESA and ex-students are called LESANS. This alumni since it begun, has greatly assisted the school in its growth, particularly with the provision of buildings which are used for the extension of classrooms, dormitories, College Laboratories and staff quarters.

VI. Saint Bede's College (SBC) Ashing –Kom

Saint Bede's College was the first mixed sex Roman Catholic College that went operational in the Bamenda Grassfields. The institution was started at Njinikom by Rev Fr Janson who while serving the Kom community at the time, realized that most boys and girls after completing primary school, stayed at home. This was because they never had the opportunity to continue schooling as no secondary institute existed in the kom Fendom at the time. Besides, the area of Mankon where Sacred Heart College and the Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary schools had been created, was far off the Kom community. The few primary school graduates that made it to Bamenda for further studies, faced a lot of difficulties most especially in the domain of transportation.

Rev Fr Janson, after closed examination of the primary school graduates, he realized the readiness expressed by most of them to continue with secondary school studies. While serving at Njinikom at the time, Fr Janson began the college at Njinikom. But this was later moved to the Belo Valley through the intervention of Augustine Ngom Njua who was the Prime Minister of West Cameroon at the time. Saint Bedes College was opened on the 10th of October 1963, and situated at Fuli- Kom, Belo Sub Division, North West Region, Cameroon. Like the other Catholic Colleges, the holistic background was implanted as part of the values of the institution. This was noticed from the students' character exhibited both within and outside the college premises.

During his period in office, Mgr. Paul Verdzekov created St Paul's Comprehensive College Nkwen and St Joseph,s Comprehensive College Mbengwi in 1990 and 1999 respectively. But before then, he had earlier in 1971, opened Home Economic Centres (HRC) in Ndop and Bafut which were later transformed into Catholic Comprehensive Colleges by his Grace, Cornelius Fontem Esua. Archbishop Esua during his episcopacy, created many other catholic colleges, with All Saints Catholic College (ASACCO) Bayelle Nkwen and the St Joseph Catholic College (SJCC) Big Mankon, as the last two. These two institutions created in 2019 in the heart Bamenda, were intended to rescue many of the students that escaped from from colleges out of Bamenda since 2017. This followed the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis that led to persistent kidnappings in their schools by separatist fighters who saw the idea of school boycott as a weapon against the state, in the handling of the Anglophone problem.

These colleges provide holistic and Catholic education to children in distant and remote areas of the Archdiocese. Many students enrolled in these institutions, came from other dioceses of Cameroon and beyond, due to the quality of education offered. Their existence created jobs opportunities for many and have through extra-curricular activities, fostered the growth of the communities where they are operated. In the Archdiocese of Bamenda, a total of 17 Catholic schools were created, with o5 of them, created and managed by various Religious Congregations. The management of these schools are linked up to the Education Secretariat which is the main department, created for the supervision of Catholic managed institutions.

The case of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Kumbo was not different from what prevailed in the Archdiocese of Bamenda. In the Diocese of Kumbo, all the twenty eight Parishes that make up the diocese, boosted of at least a basic educational institution in operation. Also functional, were professional education institutes which included the Catholic school of Health Sciences at Shisong, the Catholic University of Cameroon (CATUC) Bamenda, Kumbo campus that hosted a branch of the department of Health Science, the St Pius X Teachers Training College Tatum and the St Pius X Technical Teacher Training College, Tatum. The Diocese also operated the Saint Jerome Biblical and Pastoral Institute, Kumbo that handled issues on Pastoral Formation Ministry.

Apart from schools which focused on Pastoral formation, the Catholic Education Secretariat of Kumbo Diocese led by an Education Secretary, managed the running of the existing institutions in the Diocese. A good number of Catholic Secondary schools were created in the Diocese, to meet the educational needs of the youths.

The Diocese of Kumbo following its creation in 1982, inherited some schools and colleges which formally existed under the Archdiocese of Bamenda from which the new diocese was carved out. In this regard, St Augustine,s College that had been created in 1964 by one of the Mill Hill Missionaries, became the solid rock from which the spirit of secondary education became wide spread in the Diocese. The Catholic Church by promoting education in the area, was out to introduce the students to cultural patrimony, prepare them for professional life and encourage friendly interchanges amongst students of diverse cultures and backgrounds, thereby enforcing understanding.

These Catholic Secondary establishments have been created in almost all the Deaneries that make up the Diocese of Kumbo. By so doing the Roman Catholic Church in this part of the Bamenda Grassfields, contributed enormously to the physical growth and development of the various communities. This was noticed

through the projects which included the construction of roads accessing the schools, the construction of modern buildings, extension of electricity network and the purification of water sources among others.

VII. Saint Augustine's College (SAC) Kumbo-Nso

Popularly referred to as SAC, St Augustine's College Kumbo was created in 1964 by the Mill Hill Fathers who were the major Catholic Consecrated forces that were present in the Bamenda grassfields at the time. It officially began on 9th January 1964 as a boarding school for boys with an enrolment of 50, but shortly afterwards became a co-educational institution with Rev Fr James Nielen as its pioneer Principal. Through the ex-students Association of the institution referred to as SAESA, (St Augustine's Ex- Students Association), the image of the college spread to all ends of the world where its members were based. The association has been of great assistance to the school's progress as often they variously organize fund raising for the college. These funds are used to further boost the infrastructural development of the school and the construction, maintenance and the provisions of other items that end up to develop not only the college, but also the community of Kumbo as a whole.

The boarding school challenges that were faced and presented by some parents and students which made it difficult to get their children enrolled in the prestigious St Augustine's College, caused a worry to the church officials in the Kumbo Diocese. And mindful of the need to blend the aspect of education with good morals, the church went further to create more Catholic schools and colleges in the diocese, this time with day students opportunity offered the parents. In this regard, in 1993, the Saint Peter's College Kumbo was created. Being not a boarding school, it was made affordable to parents who could not afford sponsoring children in SAC which was a boarding school. Moral formation was a continuous activity in all the Catholic institutions. Teachers taught not only through class instructions, but also in the manner they each led their lives. Discipline was considered the foundation of excellence in the three major areas of study formation which included moral, physical, spiritual and academics. The school that was located in the heart of Kumbo was easy for daily treks to be carried out by teachers and students to and from their homes and the college campus. Though a non-boarding college, its holistic background and role of discipline shaped its students to become responsible people and pillars of development in their various communities.

Still in 1993, Saint Aloysius Minor Seminary Kitiwum was created for formation leading to the Roman Catholic Priesthood. The College like was the case with other colleges, prepared students for the Ordinary and Advanced Level Examinations subjects. The beauty of the school did not only contribute in the infrastructural development of the area, but also provided water and electricity for the area and the entire neighborhood communities.

There was also the girls' vocational school that was opened at Shisong to prepare students for commercial education. The girls were trained on how to become self-employed after training through neatening cloth, sewing and cookery. These skills enabled them to venture into many professional terrains in life, including Sisterhood. These Catholic institutions were very performant in terms of public examinations. Schools and Parishes constituted the two principal agencies of the mission of the church in the Bamenda grassfields based Catholic Dioceses. Schools acted as key Diocesan tools of evangelization in union with the local parishes, pastoral zones and deaneries. The Education Secretariat of both Dioceses, provided advice and direction on every aspect that constituted the path of holistic education. This in view, to ensure a better tomorrow for the learners. Guided by the motto: "Speak the Truth and nothing but the Truth", the Catholic Education Secretariat in Bamenda and Kumbo, ensured excellence in religious education and catechetical life of the schools.

In the Archdiocese of Bamenda, a total of 54 Nursery schools, 153 Primary schools and 17 Secondary schools were managed under the Catholic Education Secretariat. These institutions are implanted in all the 05 Divisions (Boyo, Menchum, Momo, Mezam and Ngoketunjia) that make up the Archdiocese. In all the Parishes in the Archdiocese, a Nursery and Primary school were operated. Shortly after the Diocese of Bamenda was created, it went into partnership with the Diocese of Portsmouth in England. Through this partnership, the Bamenda diocese received much assistance in the promotion of the educational sector. This link developed in different ways, with shared projects that enhanced learning and provided awareness of being part of the global Church Community.

VIII. Higher Education

The Catholic Church in the Bamenda Grassfields also in her effort to promote community development through the act of education, apart from basic and secondary school sectors, forged ahead to create tertiary/ university institutions in the region. The provision of these higher learning institutes, reduced the risk and expenses of individuals travelling to distant places for the sake of acquiring knowledge. With the putting in place of these varsity schools, the infrastructural development of the region was further boosted by the church, particularly within the community where the institution was based. Furthermore, these institutions attracted people from other parts of the country to get themselves enrolled for studies.

IX. Catholic University of Cameroon (CATUC)

Mindful of the numerous graduates from Catholic background Secondary High Schools, the multiplication of Catholic colleges within the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province and the liberalization of the Higher Education sector in Cameroon in the 1990s provoked the need for the creation of an Anglo-Saxon Catholic University in Bamenda. This move was equally given a push by reports of Language and other challenges faced by Anglophone students in the Catholic University of Central Africa. Cognizance of the above and determined to get matters resolved for the good of the Anglophone parents and students with varsity interest, Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua in company with the other Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province, formally applied for the creation of a Catholic University in Bamenda. This request was filed to the State via the Ministry of Higher Education on March 5th 2009 and on July 6th of same year, the request was officially granted.

Rev .Fr Michael Suh Nibawas appointed its pioneer Vice Chancellor to head a management Board team of 07 experts and to propose a take off plan for CATUC. This mission was successful executed and on October 15TH, 2010, the institution was officially launched. This was done through a pontifical Holy Mass and matriculation of the pioneer undergraduate pioneer students.

On January 12th 2011, the final authorization was issued by the Ministry of Higher Education. This granted CATUC the right to operate the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate (BMD) system. The holistic background of the institution attracted students from within and without the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province. With a spectacular growth of students' population and with the vision to get CATUC's existence felt in the entire province, its campus in Bamenda was spread to Kumbo and Mamfe. The University whose main but temporal premises was located within the Big Mankon Cathedral premises, began its studies with Health, agriculture, Management and Social sciences. CATUC has enabled many existing missionary congregations in the Ecclesiastical Province, to sacrifice less in terms of expenses, insponsoring their aspirants acquire some basic knowledge of interest and necessity such as Philosophy. In the past, these congregations in terms of offering University studies for their aspirants could only do so by sending them to the Catholic University of Central Africa situated at Nkolbisson- Yaounde, and in some cases, abroad.

X. The Impact of Catholic Education on Development

The Roman Catholic Church as an existing structure, was not a profit making body as its main objective was to carry out evangelization works through every route of human necessity including education. In the Bamenda Grassfields, the Catholic Church laid the foundation of formal education in the region. From a historical perspective, the Catholic Church was the first body that took the responsibility to provide education to the Bamenda Grassfield communities, even ahead of the colonial authorities. In this regard through the provision of educational establishments the population alongside the various communities in the region, registered some results, interpreted as both positive and negative.

On a positive note, the Roman Catholic Church by creating educational establishments in almost all the living communities in the Bamenda grassfields, contributed enormously to wipe out illiteracy within the population. These schools that were put in place in almost all the Parish communities, coupled with the need to read and interpret the Bible, motivated many people of all ages and sex, irrespective of denominational or racial background, to get themselves enrolled for studies. Mindful of the fact that the process of education began from the base, the church made sure that primary schools were created in all the parishes, with church authorities and Christians encouraged to sensitize the people on the need to allow their children go to school.

Secondly, the putting in place of educational establishments by the Roman Catholic Church in the region, provided employment to many adults and youths, be they educated or not .The income received by these individuals assisted them to improve on their livelihood as they were able to pay their taxes, build their family homes, sponsor their children and indulged into other profitable ventures such as business and large scale farming and livestock rearing which all increased their sources of earnings. The trained and higher levels educated employees performed the role of teachers, school secretaries and office assistance, while the less educated and unskilled, worked as drivers, cooks, cleaners, gate men, and school guards among services.

The existence of the Catholic schools, boosted the economy of the various communities that hosted them. The teachers of these schools came from different places and tribes. From their allowances received, they bought food and other items that were sold in the community. By so transacting, the church through her employees, increased the rate at which money circulated in the given community. In addition, the presence of these schools encouraged the people in the various communities to enter into business ventures at every level, depending on what constituted their capital. This led to the opening of wholesale and retail provision stores where articles of all kinds were sold, drinking spots where teachers could relax after work, documentation rooms and computer units where both teachers and students could print out relevant documents and carry out research, and the sales of cooked food in restaurants amongst others. These activities did not only keep the community alive in terms of people interacting for diversified reasons, but also helped to increase the flow of

money which made it easier for the inhabitants to pay their taxes and donate generously to the development of their communities in every aspect that was deemed necessary.

Most parts of the region today boast of modern infrastructures. This was thanks to Roman Catholic Church officials of which some were architects. In most areas where they settled, the church, parish and school structures that were erected, were supervised by church officials who same time had knowledge on the aspect of construction works. The erection of these structures motivated most community inhabitants as they proceeded to construct fine structures for their families. Added to the aspect of house structures, the church by opening schools in most parts of the Bamenda Grassfields, brought development through the rehabilitation and construction of roads, bridges, and the provision of Pipe borne water and electricity. This was the case with the creation of the Saint Aloysius Minor Seminary whom according to Yuyung Fabian, testified that the Catholic Church by creating a college at Kitiwum, brought out to light the people. Prior to the creation of the school, the village was completely down in terms of difficulties in having electricity supply and access to treated water supply. Same explanation came from Meh Sylvester Diom, a native of Bafmeng in Fungom Sub Division.

Furthermore, the creation of various institutions by the Roman Catholic Church in the North West Region, led to the exposure of the peoples culture to other parts of the country and beyond. The region is not only endowed with the presence of human resources, but also blessed in terms of showcasing the rich culture of Africans, mindful of the historical background of the people in terms of origin. As earlier noted, the Bamenda grassfields with a population of over 1.8 million inhabitants, is made up of people from different tribal leanings.

Also, the creation of schools by the Catholic Church in most parts of the North West Region, reshaped positively the mindset of the indigenes, particularly in the rural areas noted for the evil practices of witchcraft and the exhibition of satanic traditional beliefs which in some cases led to the death of some indigenes. Through religious studies, lessons were presented to the pupils and students on the dangers of doing things that were not approved by God our creator. Often they were reminded by the teachers that it was best for every one to live a righteous life so as to gain Salvation at the end of his or her life on earth. With these lessons, learners got their mentalities tilted towards accepting just the rights, positive and embrace God's words. In some cases, children refused to succeed their parents, because they feared to get themselves forced to continue with the practice of certain cultures and traditional rites which included the pouring of libations to the gods. These were practices that went contrary to the church's doctrine.

Though with the wish to contribute to the betterment of human life and the society, the Roman Catholic Church in her effort to get this wish accomplished, faced some difficulties which led to the Church authorities, criticized for not having done it as pronounced on the church pulpits. In this regard, some people in the communities saw the Catholic Church as a religious institution made of cheats, exploiters and hypocrites. These attributes emanated from the fact that, some policies that were put in place for the managements of educational establishments, did not work in favour of the common masses in the communities where they operated.

In most communities where Catholic schools existed, church authorities ran into land crisis with some individuals, groups and families who accused them of having played over their intelligence to take over their lands. In the Holy Bible, quotes like "to offer to God is to gain salvation", "God loves a cheerful giver" and, "anything offered to God is given back a hundred fold" encouraged Christians on the aspect of generosity. These words caught the attention of some Christians who went on to freely offer their family land to the church and in some cases, received just a token of compensation. With the wish to open up more schools, the RCC went into negotiations with some people and families, and at the end were accused of expropriating some vast lands, reserved by some families for future use. This was the case with the Suse's family of Bambui. They accused the Catholic Church of having deceived their late father with a few shillings in the early 1960s to take over their family land. This accusation caused the family to drag the St Peter's Catholic Parish church to the Mezam High Court in May 2003.

Secondly, the creation of Schools by the Catholic Church caused some communities to surrender a good portion of their land to the church. By virtue of existence, a complete school campus must have enough space to enable the construction of classrooms, football and handball fields, a garden and farm land for the cultivation of crops. These schools in most parts of the Bamenda Grassfields communities, occupied vast and fertile farm lands. They were underused as the church authorities were not only able to get them farmed by villagers so as to produce more yields for the community. Rather, in most cases, Christians were refused access to these parcels of church lands, as most of these lands were fenced, thus giving no room for trespassing by whosoever. These extensive plots developed into bushes, thus becoming fertile habitats for birds and harmful insects and reptiles such as snakes.

Furthermore, salaries paid the teachers and auxiliary staff members by the church also caused a setback to the development of most communities in the Region. The region is blessed with hard working individuals. This emanated from the fact that as a region whose population depends more on agricultural and livestock activities for survival, children while still tender in age, are trained for such activities. With this practice, they grew up to be very strong as far as the aspect of physical strength was concerned. As explained by some

individuals, they earned more while involved in farming activities than when employed to work as a teacher in a catholic school. Generally, Catholic school teachers were poorly paid by the catholic education authorities, as the take home package at the end of each month could not help them meet up with their basic needs. As a result, most of these school workers resigned their functions to become private operators. By so venturing, they felt better up to generate income and manage their families and the growth of their communities, when compared to what they received while serving as mission church workers.

The idea of creating schools by the Catholic Church was received with great joy in most communities of the North West Region of Cameroon. These schools were opened to the general public and pupils/students admitted irrespective of denominational, tribal or linguistic background. Unfortunately, the high tuition fees levied the parents to pay for their children in these schools, caused some parents of poor background and low earnings, to deprive their children of the right to education. This was the case in remote rural areas that were not opportune to have government managed institutions. Deprived of education, most children of such communities grew up without the opportunity of becoming useful to the society in terms of occupying juicy positions in Government through which they could foster the development of their communities. The inability of parents to get their children enrolled in Catholic institutions due to high tuition levy, retarded the development of some communities in the Bamenda grassfields.

XI. Conclusion

The Catholic Church in the Bamenda Grassfields equally achieved its goal of community development through the provision of educational establishments. Through excellent performances registered by their institutions year in year out, North West region had become the citadel of knowledge in Cameroon as children of parents from different regions scrambled for admission into Catholic schools. Despite the challenges faced, Catholic Educational authorities have kept the faith, as even in some cases where they suffered attacks of different kind, they remained determined to move on with the spirit. The impact left by Catholic institutions in the region, had far reaching effects that left an indelible imprint on the communities in the region. The aspect of education was the light of every community and thus came in the Catholic Church to implant educational establishments that have stood the test of time. This article examined Catholic education in the Bamenda Grassfields with a view to demonstrate its contribution to the development of the region. It argued that Catholic education in its various dimensions, was a catalyst for development in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon.

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