

Implication of the Mankon Diaspora in the Social Transformation of Bamenda, Cameroon, 1961-2021

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Abstract: *The presence of large numbers of Mankon indigenous people in the United States of America, Canada, Britain, Germany, China and other countries constitutes a substantial source of development in the homeland funded through remittances. The extent to which migrant Mankon communities reconnect with their home community in terms of visible and viable socio-economic contributions provides room for a much more profound scholarly engagement. It is in this perspective that this paper examines the social activities of the Mankon diaspora in the development of the homeland. To this end, this study made use of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources mostly constituted interviews with Bamenda diaspora returnees and those abroad. A cross-section of Mankon locally based indigenes was also interviewed to have the incidence of diaspora contributions in their communities. Secondary sources comprised both published and unpublished books and articles scooped from diverse public and private repositories. The study adopted a thematic approach in the presentation of the article and the use of qualitative analysis. From its finding, the study revealed that a characteristic spirit of communalism among the diaspora population necessitated their ventures in social and economic enterprises that benefitted the homeland.*

Key Words: *Mankon, Diaspora, development.*

I. Introduction

Mankon is the largest chiefdom amongst the chiefdoms that constitute the Bamenda city like the chiefdoms of Nkwen and Bamendankwe. Bamenda is the capital of the Northwest Region of Cameroon and Mankon is a centralized Fandom situated on the Bamenda plateau punctuated by undulating gentle hills and numerous valleys. It was the settlement and expansion of Mankon that partly laid the foundation stone for the birth of first, the town and later on, the city of Bamenda. Mankon was built out of 19th century migrations that saw the emergence of centralized polities in the Bamenda Grassfields of today's Cameroon. Mankon has an estimated population of about 140,000 people in 1990 and 1992 and in 2012 the estimate placed the population at 350,000 inhabitants.¹ Mankon is located between latitude 5^o 15¹ and 7^o 10¹ North between Longitude 9^o 17¹ and 11^o 25¹ East, and has a surface area of 17,910km². Over the years, the Mankon diaspora maintained a strong sense of attachment to the homeland with annual flows of remittances evidently shaping the socio-economic landscape.

Remittances constitute a huge proportion of diaspora contribution to the development of developing countries especially in the last three decades when these economies were trapped in a prolonged recession. With unemployment ratios on steady increases over this period of time, the dependency ratios grew simultaneously. With few sources of sustainable income at their disposal, remittances became a means of survival for the lots of them. Ratha further notes that,

When migrants send home part of their earnings in the form of either cash or goods to support their families, these transfers are known as workers' or migrant remittances. They have been growing rapidly in the past few years and now represent the largest source of foreign income for many developing economies. It is hard to estimate the exact size of remittance flows because many take place through unofficial channels. Worldwide, officially recorded international migrant remittances are projected to reach \$596 billion in 2017, with \$450 billion flowing to developing economies. These are recorded in the balance of payments; exactly how to record them is being reviewed by an international technical group. Unrecorded flows through informal channels are believed to be at least 50 percent larger than recorded flows. Not only are remittances large but they are also more evenly distributed among developing economies than capital flows, including foreign direct investment.

¹Christopher Chi Che, *A Concise and Analytical History of Mankon Kingdom, About 1197-2012* (Bamenda: AGWECAM'S Publishers, Bamenda, January 2013), 3-5

Remittances are especially important for low-income countries and account for nearly 4 percent of their GDP, compared with about 1.5 percent of GDP for middle-income countries.²

As such, while the nature of remittances differs across settings, the impacts are usually astounding especially on the receivers.

In their efforts to foster the collective growth of Mankon, the diaspora formed associations through which they operated. Some of these associations were the Mankon Cultural and Development Association (MA.CU.D.A.), Mankon Forum Scholarship Initiative (MFSI) in USA, the Sacred Heart College Ex-students Association Mankon extraction in USA, The Alahnkie Youths Association in South Africa and Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon Women commonly called Nkah women. Through these associations the Mankon Diasporas individually and collectively contributed to the development of Mankon by carrying out social activities. The diaspora social activities like the construction of the Mankon museum, promotion of the Mankon culture and language, promotion of education, construction of classrooms in schools, empowerment of the girl child, construction of culverts, development in health sector, tourism and land consultancy.

II. Conceptual Framework

It is important to enable the understanding of the word “diaspora” by contextualizing it in the case-study of Mankon. Although the concept is rightly debated by many scholars, the African Union confirmed that African diaspora refers to the geographical dispersal of people whose ancestors, within historical memory, originally came from Africa and who are currently domiciled, or claim residence or citizenship, outside the continent of Africa and who are willing to contribute to the development and building of the continent of Africa.³ Although the AU definition took into the consideration the diaspora contributive aspect to development of the continent Africa, this definition ran short of recognizing intra-African diaspora as part of African diaspora. In my research work, the citizens of Bamenda who have migrated to other African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon or South Africa for example are considered as diaspora.

After viewing the above definitions of African diaspora by the various authors, this researcher then settled that Mankon diaspora can be defined as people of Mankon origin who have migrated beyond national boundaries of Cameroon and find themselves either in other African countries in this case intra-African diaspora or in other continents which can be called intercontinental African diaspora. Overall, the Mankon diaspora share the characteristics of homeland consciousness, creation of associations or organizations and with the interest of contributing to the development of the homeland.

III. The Mankon Diaspora in Infrastructural Development

The diaspora was very instrumental in the modernization and construction of the Mankon museum at the Mankon palace which was completed in 2008. This project was championed by His Royal Highness *Fo S.A.N. Angwafo III* of Mankon. In the year 2000 the project started with the demolition of the old and dilapidated structure to give it a modern structure. In this project the Mankon Diaspora association known as MA.CU.D.A. Washington metropolitan branch in the United States of America contributed greatly for its realization. MACUDA had its roots in the homeland Mankon formed in 1990 to initiate and promote cultural and development projects in Mankon. With limping movement towards its objectives for creation, its branches were however created outside Cameroon that sphere-headed development in Mankon. Such was the MACUDA Washington metropolitan branch in the USA created in 1998.⁴

MA.CU.D.A USA branch in 2002 raised the sum of one thousand US dollars through His Royal Highness *Fo S.A.N. Angwafo III*. This money was realized through a fund raising drive organized during a reception party in honour of the *Fon* of Mankon during his maiden visit to the USA in May 2002.⁵ The MA.CU.D.A Washington branch president, Ndefru Susan and treasurer, Martin Ndefru promised on behalf of the association to raise more money for the project. In 2004 MA.CU.D.A USA branch again raised the sum of 9,778,000FCFA and added to the realization of the Mankon palace museum project.⁶

²Dillip Ratha, “What are Remittances?” <https://www.imf.org/external/Pubs/FT/fandd/basics/pdf/ratha-remittances.pdf>, accessed on 23 November 2022.

³Ibid., 5.

⁴ Mankon Palace Archive “The Revised Constitution of Mankon Cultural and Development Association (MACUDA)”, (Mankon, Bamenda, 2015), 1.

⁵ Mankon Palace Archive, “Mankon Traditional Council (MTC) File No. 113, Mankon Museum volume II”, Mankon Palace, 03/01/2006 – 03/04/2008.

⁶ Ibid.

The Mankon diaspora in France were not left out. MA.CU.D.A. Paris contributed the sum of 3.309.000CFA for the realization of the museum.⁷ Some other MA.CU.D.A branches in Canada, Germany, South Africa, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Nkah Women in USA also contributed enormously to this project realization. The museum project with a total estimated cost of construction of 125.000.000FCFA was completed in June 2008.⁸ Some Mankon migrants at individual level also contributed financially for the realization of this project. The Mankon museum has not only attracted tourists from in and out of Cameroon who come and spent some money to see the artefacts in the museum but has also given a face-lift to the layout of the Mankon palace. The remittances from the diaspora led to the completion of the Mankon museum which stood distinct as one of the iconic touristic edifices in Mankon since 2008. The museum has not only become a source of revenue for other development projects in Mankon, it has also given a new face-lift to the Mankon Palace layout.⁹

The financial remittances from MA.CU.D.A USA also impacted development in the construction of classrooms in G.S.S. Alahnkie Mankon. G.S.S. Alahnkie Mankon was created in 2014 in the most neglected quarter in Mankon in terms of educational establishments. Dr. Leyshe Simon Nsoh and Zama Nde-Bih offered some rooms in their compounds to kick start the school.¹⁰ In order to build classrooms in the school, appeal letters were written lobbying for financial assistance. This appeal yielded the sum of 5,072,000 francs which was sent to the P.T.A of the school and it was successfully managed to construct five classrooms that were pending plastering, flooring, painting and ceiling in the school.¹¹ Without the assistance from MA.CU.D.A USA, G.S.S Alahnkie would still have been operating on rented premises as per the time of this research work. The school had been deserted and was invaded by wild grass at the time of this research and this picture could not be clearer than this. MA.CU.D.A. USA had therefore contributed in building the only secondary school in the locality of the Alahnkie quarter and promised carrying out further projects in the school but for the Anglophone crisis that broke out on October 21, 2016 and frustrated education in the two regions of Cameroon.¹² Away from the construction of classrooms, the Mankon diaspora were also agents of development in the construction of culverts, borehole water projects and extension of electricity in Mankon.

MACUDA USA further enhanced development in Mankon by supporting with remittances projects like the construction of culverts, borehole water and assisting in the extension of electricity and the construction of bridges especially within the vicinity of Ngulung quarter.¹³ In an interview with the Mayor of the Bamenda II Council, Mayor Balick Awah Fidelis, to know whether MFSI USA remittances for the execution of development projects passed through the council before the projects were realized, this is what the Mayor said: Mankon diaspora has hardly passed through the Bamenda II Council in carrying out their projects. The council only sees their projects realized. I was told about MFSI Project of constructing a bridge linking Alachu quarter and Ngulung and also the extension of electricity from the quarter head of Ngulung and by the time I went to the site the bridge was already completed. As the head of the Bamenda II Council, I want to say here that the interest of the Mankon man should be to see that the “patient is treated and not which medicine or (doctor) has treated the patient.” The patient here refers to Mankon and the transformation of its landscape. So the Mankon people should be more interested in the development of the community and not necessarily how and who had brought the development. I am happy with the Mankon diaspora contributions to the development of the Bamenda II municipality.¹⁴

Other migrant associations that also carried out water projects were MA.CU.D.A South African branch and Alahnkie Youths Association in South Africa. They jointly carried out a borehole water project in Alahnkie

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Abel Ndeh Sanjou-Tadzong, 72 years, retired Government Delegate Bamenda city Council, interviewed by Wilfred Nde Wankah, (the Author), Nzuemabeah, November 10, 2018.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The pioneer Principal, Wilfred Nde Wankah, had to lobby for assistance and wrote an appeal letter to MA.CU.D.A USA branch through the branch President Ernest Nsoh.

¹¹ Ernest Nsoh, 52 years, President of Mankon Cultural and Development Association MA.CU.D.A USA Branch, December 12, 2018. The pioneer principal of the school Winfred Nde Wankah wrote appeal letters. He gave one through Earnest Nsoh to MACUDA USA and the sum of 5072000frs CFA was realized.

¹² Ernest Nsoh and Wara Charles, former and current Presidents of Mankon Cultural and Development Association MA.CU.D.A respectively), e-mail messages to Wankah Winfred Nde, December 12, 2018.

¹³ Fausta Nditah, 43 years, President of Mankon Forum Scholarship Initiative, USA, interviewed through telephone by Winfred Nde Wankah, January 16, 2019.

¹⁴ Efi Tembom and Lea Ebanja, eds, “2015-2016 Annual Report” in Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Bible Translation for Literacy (Yaounde: Tropic CABTAL Printing Cameroon, 2017), 7.

quarter.¹⁵ The Mankon diaspora in South Africa created MA.CU.D.A South Africa in 2003 and the Mankon diaspora from Alahnkie Mankon in particular later formed the Alahnkie youths Association in South Africa in 2005. All the members of this association belonged to MA.CU.D.A South Africa but there were some development projects they executed independent of MA.CU.D.A as a whole. These projects would always be particularly in the Alahnkie quarter. In 2014 this association in South Africa started the project of borehole water. The sum of 800.000 francs was sent for this purpose and it was managed (executed) by the home based youth association at Alahnkie.¹⁶

The home based Alahnkie youths managed and supervised the project with the quarter head acting as the project chairperson. It should be noted that the realization and completion of the borehole in 2015 in Alahnkie came on time to relief the Alahnkie community from water crisis. Alahnkie by the local meaning of the word means the land of water. Ironically it had only one main stream which was not a good source of drinking water and it often went dry during the dry season. The realization of this borehole water project by the Alahnkie youths Association from South Africa was quite relieving as the Alahnkie community was then proud of a good source of drinking water.¹⁷ The Alahnkie youths Association in South Africa after realizing the water project in 2016, immediately engaged in another project of consolidating electricity in the area and extending it to the whole community, a project that is on-going. The Mankon migrants also extended development in Mankon in the domain of culture and education.

IV. Preservation of Indigenous Culture and Identity

One of the social services where diaspora associations contributed towards was in the preservation of the Mankon culture from being eroded by modernization and urbanization. Mankon is one of the three indigenous polities that make up the city of Bamenda. Like Bamendankwe and Nkwen, Mankon faces the threat of losing its cultural identity to the influence of diverse settlers who seek various opportunities within the expanding city of Bamenda. MA.CU.DA USA in the interest of upholding the Mankon culture and to hand it down for posterity, raised the sum of 500.000 francs in 2013 with the aim of promoting the learning and writing of the Mankon language. The money was sent to MA.CU.DA home branch to scrupulously supervise the teaching and learning of the Mankon language.¹⁸

The MA.CU.DA home branch with its national president, Colonel Simon Tamambang, entrusted the assignment to the Mankon education family, the Mankon Teachers Union (MA.T.U) with its national president, Wilfred Nde Wankah, who immediately set to work. The services of an expert, Christopher Chi Che, an English language and literature in English teacher by profession and specialist in phonetics were consulted to carry out the assignment. Christopher Chi Che organized a one week Seminar at Sunrise College Mankon where the Mankon teachers were invited and taught how to speak and write the Mankon language. This task was facilitated by a book he had earlier written in the Mankon language titled "*Tse Bo Bi Ntsu Ni yam*" which was a pedagogic and self-help learning approach to Mankon Language. He trained the participants to be trainers and today a group of Mankon teachers like Fon Folera, Akenji Zacheus, Tibui Irine, Musong Justine, Mobufor Augustine, Nche Nganya, Lum Gwendolyn, Ngwa Zacheus and Mumbari Chantal were incorporated as Mankon Language Committee into the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL).¹⁹

CABTAL was an organization in charge of studying and writing of local languages in Cameroon and so far, it was working with seventy-two language communities in Cameroon since 2016.²⁰ This was a great development in the Mankon culture and language. So far the first four books of the New Testament Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) have been translated into the Mankon language. The custodian of the Mankon culture, *Fo S.A.N Angwafo III* excited over the progress of the project posited that "I gave land for you to build and operate your churches. I have only one request, give me the Bible in Mankon."²¹ The Mankon diary had also been improved upon wherein the days of the week, months and seasons have been written in the Mankon language. Apart from the Mankon language, the diaspora cultural transformation was also experienced in the promotion of education through scholarship initiatives.

¹⁵ Regina Bih Nche, Secretary General Alahnkie Youths Association South Africa, e-mail message to the author, January 10, 2019.

¹⁶ Mengestus Ndeh, President of Alahnkie Youths Association South Africa, e-mail message to the author, January 23, 2019.

¹⁷ John Akoh, 56 years, Quarter head Alahnkie, interviewed by the author, Alahnkie, January 16, 2019.

¹⁸ Simon Tamambang, President Mankon cultural and Development Association (MA.CU.D.A), Minutes of MA.CU.D.A, Home Branch, March 16, 2013, and discussion with the author, Nitop II Mankon, November 28, 2018.

¹⁹ Efi Tembon and Lea Ebanja eds, "2015-2016 Annual Report," 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

V. Promotion of Education opportunities and women empowerment

In 1986, Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon women (light of growth in Mankon) exclusively made up of twenty eight educated Mankon women of salary and wage earners came into existence. With an exponential growth in membership, branches were formed all over the national territory of Cameroon like in Douala, Yaoundé, Kumba, Buea and some branches out of the country. Later in 1994 Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon USA branch was formed. It came in powerfully to contribute to the empowerment of vulnerable girls and women and their right to education, support to pupils and students in Government primary and secondary schools with basic school needs and scholarships, organized career counselling for girls in secondary and high schools in Mankon.

The diaspora also contributed in the promotion of education through the award of scholarships. The Mankon diaspora under the auspices of the Mankon Forum Scholarship Initiative (MFSI) contributed in shaping education in the Bamenda II municipality. This Mankon Diaspora association known by the acronym MFSI based in USA had contributed to the promotion of education amongst the Mankon youths through its president Fausta Ditah based in 4-Stone Water Creek USA and the home based coordinator, Ivo Fru Chi.²²

This was a group comprised of sons and daughters of Mankon origin and some well-wishers based in USA that sought to promote academic support. The MFSI since inception in 2007 had granted scholarships and assisted single parental homes or orphans in schools in the locality of Mankon in the form of money, fees and other school needs in some schools in Mankon such as C.S Ntambeng, C. S. Alamatu, C.S. Ntamafe, G.S. Ntingkag, G.S. Aturafo, G.B.H.S. Mankon, and G.S.S Alahnkie.²³ It should be noted that MFSI was apolitical and was not profit oriented. It was therefore, a philanthropic group and with a guiding objective of coming to the aid of every individual who met up the requirements for consideration irrespective of gender, educational institution, religion or political affiliation in Mankon.²⁴ Worthy of note here was that a total of 93 children had benefited from G.B.H.S. Mankon which as of today is the major focus of MFSI.²⁵ Trying to find out why G.B.H.S Mankon stood as the highest beneficiary from MFSI and whether MFSI was not biased in rationing of assistance back at home, this writer realized that almost all the MFSI USA members were ex-students from G.B.H.S. Mankon so they were simply paying homage to their alma mater where they were nurtured.

In barely ten years (2007 – 2017) of its existence, the MFSI had also promoted education by supporting minority groups of people in the Mankon community like the Bororos at Ntumbong II and Atuafon by sponsoring their children in primary schools. In fact three children of the Bororo community had completed primary school and were currently pursuing secondary education and this was great because the Bororo community did not like sending children to school.²⁶ Migrant contribution to development in education can also be examined in the activities of a feminine inclined association, Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon, USA branch.

Nkah Nikwi USA branch fostered development in Mankon especially in the domain of education. In 2016 at the 30th birthday (pearl Jubilee) celebration of Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon the Nkah USA branch started a very important project for the empowerment and growth of the Mankon girl child. This was a six years scholarship program for vulnerable girls in government secondary and high schools and the best performance in the GCE O/L and A/L results for girls of Mankon origin. In this program the following schools were ear marked in Mankon: G.S.S. Alahnkie, GBSS Ngomgham, GBHS Nitop, GTC Bagmande, GTC Ntahkah, GBHS Mankon and GTHS Alabukam. Coordinated by a home based representative, Angu Elizabeth, the project started in 2016 only for girl children of Mankon extraction and for the brilliant ones who were selected to help them complete the high school.²⁷ In all 65 students were selected in 2016 from the six schools for the scholarship as seen in the following table.

Schools and number of students with scholarship in 2016

S/N	Location of School	No. Selected
1	Government Secondary School Alahnkie	18
2	Government Bilingual High School Mankon	12
3	Government Bilingual High School Nitob	10
4	Government Technical College Bagmande	09

²² Interview with Fausta Ditah.

²³ Ivo Fru Chi, 51years, interviewed by Wilfred Nde Wankah, at Mile 8 Mankon, December 13, 2018.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Interview with Fausta Ditah.

²⁶ Interview with Ivo Fru Chi.

²⁷ Elizabeth Wiremiyere Angu, 52 years, home based coordinator of the activities of Nkah Nikwi USA, teacher by Profession, interviewed by Wilfred Nde Wankah, Ntarinkon Mankon, January 19, 2019.

5	Government Bilingual Secondary School Ngomgham	08
6	Government Technical College Ntahkah	08
	Total	65

Source: Statistics collected from the log-book in Nkah Nikwi Secretariat at Ngomgham, December 12, 2018.

The students as indicated in the table were selected following a given criteria and they were to be supported in their education with the sum of 50.000 francs each academic year. For the 65 students selected they were to spend a total of 3.250.000 francs a year and 150.000 francs for the one candidate from the GCE O/L and the one for the GCE A/L. This therefore meant that Nkah USA spent a total of 3.400.000frs each academic year and for 6 years means they would spent 20.400.000frs for this first set of candidates selected. Those that were selected in form two means they were to be supported for six years and the number of years were reducing by one until those that were selected in upper sixth in 2016 had to benefit only for one year.²⁸ After 2016, the escalation of the Anglophone crisis and the opposition of school enrolment by separatists caused a major setback to this scholarship program. However, the amount of money put into the scholarship program saw an increase from 50000FrancsCFA in 2016 to 300000FrancsCFA in 2021. This is illustrated as seen the following table.

Total amount benefited by the laureates following their various classes by 2016

Class in 2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total amount
Upper Sixth	50.000	-	-	-	-	-	50.000
Lower sixth	50.000	50.000	-	-	-	-	100.000
Form 5	50.000	50.000	50.000	-	-	-	150.000
Form 4	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	-	-	200.000
Form 3	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	-	250.000
Form 2	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	300.000

Source: Field work by the author, January 18, 2019.

These statistics were collected and compiled by the author from Nkah Empowerment Center at Ngomgham, January 18, 2019. This table illustrates the total amount of money to be used in supporting the student to complete the high school depending on the class in which the student was in 2016 when they were selected for the scholarship. Any student that failed and was repeating lost the scholarship. Students had to maintain the scholarship by performing well in promotion and official examinations.²⁹ The overall best performance among the Mankon girls in the 2016 GCE O/L and A/L in the whole Republic of Cameroon went home with cash prizes of 50.000 francs by Mambo Emmanuela Ndeh for the O/L and 100.000 francs by Akumawah Fru Awah Laura for the A/L. This unique and highly applauded occasion took place at the Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon Empowerment Center at Ngomgham Mankon in 2016.

During the occasion the laureates and their parents or guardians were invited to the hall and the euphoria was total happiness. It was hoped that this was going to spur the laureates to study harder while parents whose children did not make it would see the need to encourage girl education in Mankon. As the saying goes “Educating the girl child is educating the nation”, it was hoped that illiteracy was going to be eradicated in Mankon in no distant time. Unfortunately hardly had the dust from the excitement settled when the Anglophone problem in the North-West and South West Regions of Cameroon started showing its ugly face. The laureates had not completed the 2016 academic year when classes were interrupted on October 21, 2016 because of the Anglophone crisis. At GSS Alahnkie Mankon where 18 laureates were selected the students were no longer going to school and have lost the scholarship. It was the same in the other schools.³⁰ The Mankon migrants also took interest in the health sector in the Bamenda II municipality.

VI. Health Provision

In the health sector Nkah Nikwi USA branch contributed to the improvement of health situation in Mankon. They donated machines; beds, beddings and some financial support to some health centers like Alabukam Health Center, Integrated Health Centre at Mulang and Alamandum and also the government District

²⁸ Diana Chendi Manthobang, National President of Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon Women), e-mail message from USA to the author, January 14 and 18, 2019.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Susan Ndefru, President of Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon Women USA Branch, based in USA), e-mail message to the author, December 28, 2018.

hospital at Ntingkag.³¹ For the District hospital at Ntingkag, Nkah Nikwi USA also made financial support by carrying out a borehole water project for the hospital.³² Some Mankon diaspora at the level of individuals also made social contributions towards the development of the Mankon municipality by opening of health clinics in Mankon. Apart from the diaspora association or group contributions to the development, there were some diaspora individual projects realized which also contributed to social development in the Bamenda II municipality. A good example of an individual migrant social project realized in the health sector was the Peoples Clinic of Lawrence Neba Formambuh.

Lawrence Neba Formambuh was a Mankon diaspora because of the circumstances (events) in Cameroon in the 1960s. This was the UPC terrorist activities which led to the banning of the party in 1955 and 1957 in French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroons respectively. The banning of the UPC in British Southern Cameroons led to the formation of One Kamerun Party (OK) of Ndeh Ntumazah which had the same political ideologies like the UPC. The OK party was seen as the UPC party in disguise by the French and Ahidjo's government in Cameroon. In this way the OK leaders were hunted down. Nde Ntumazah leader of the OK party and some militants including Lawrence Formambuh who doubled as Nde Ntumazah's driver had to escape to Ghana after the Plebiscite in British Southern Cameroons in 1961.³³ Dr. Formambuh escaping for his dear life took refuge in Ghana. While in Ghana he gained experience as he visited many other African and European countries for educational and professional training.

While in the diaspora he seized the opportunity and went to school where he studied General Medicine in Ghana and in the University in Hungary (PECS). After graduation he had some post graduate courses in the university teaching hospital in Hungary in general medicine before returning to Cameroon. In 1980 he came back to Cameroon to develop his home land, the Bamenda II municipality by establishing a private health clinic unit at Ngomgham Mankon called the People's Clinic. The People's Clinic of Dr. Formambuh Lawrence was established and went functional in 1990 as a private medical clinic. It was approved and legalized by the Cameroon government. Since 1990, the clinic employed two trained nurses and 15 auxiliary staff who were trained on the spot based on discipline and the principles of the medical core. Progressively, many were recruited and given in-service training.

Through this health unit, medical attention was facilitated in the Ngomgham locality and it saved the pains of covering long distances with patients for medical attention. It also created employment as the workers were paid and they earned a living and were also able to bring up their own families by sponsoring their children in schools. Some of the nurses because of the in-service training were recruited and employed by the Cameroon ministry of public health as testified by one of them, Swirri Esther Forbang. She was one of those recruited and employed by the ministry of public health and posted to work in the Laquintinie Hospital in Douala.³⁴ The veteran Lawrence Formambuh while on retirement brought in other experience professionals and specialized doctors like Professor Pishoh who is working in the health unit.

Despite Formambuh's pro-efficiency in the medical field, he faced some difficulties outstanding among them was that many patients went away without paying for the medical treatment. This was because most of them Mankon people who exploited their familiarity with the proprietor of the clinic.³⁵ There was also the lack of subventions from the Cameroon government to support the private medical health care establishment. Private Health Institutions created employment opportunities for citizens and also paid heavy taxes to the government. This reduced the task of heavy dependence on the government to employ the youths in the country. Instead of the government granting subventions to such health institutions to support them pay their workers, the government instead bothered the health institutions with heavy taxes. This made Lawrence, the proprietor of the Peoples Clinic at Ngomgham, unable to steadily increase the pay package to his employees.³⁶ The diaspora impact in development was also felt in the tourism sector in Mankon.

³¹ Rose Asongwe and Judith Ngang, eds. "Pearl Jubilee", in *Nkah Nikwei Ni Mankon Women Magazine*, 4th edition, (Mankon, Bamenda: Positive Vision Cameroon (PVC), 2016), 23-25.

³² Visitors record book, Ntingkag District hospital, the office of resource management, Ntingkag – Mankon, May 16, 2001.

³³ Victor Julius Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, (Limbe: Presbook Limbe, 1996), 229-230.

³⁴ Esther Swirri Forbang, 52 years, interviewed by Wilfred Nde Wankah, Ntamambuh Mankon, November 28, 2018.

³⁵ Lawrence Neba Formambuh, testified that whether the excuses of the patients were genuine or not, he never made court cases with the patients because of his professional ethics adopted from the medical university school in Hungary, Austria which stated that "Patients first, patients second and patients third before money comes in." this professional ethics was the oath he took at his graduation for his medical degree (MDs) from the Medical University Teaching Hospital in Hungary. Violating the oath would have made him empty in the profession as he testified.

³⁶ Interview with Lawrence Neba Formambuh.

VII. Humanitarian Services

In the field of humanitarianism, some Mankon returnees have openly expressed human feelings to alleviate the pains and suffering of some vulnerable groups of people in Mankon by going to their aid. An example was Ignatius Ndefru Nkwenti who had acted as land consultant since he came back to Cameroon. He became a consultant especially in land matters expressing human feelings and hated seeing people deprived of their rights or property especially the vulnerable people like widows and orphans. Some cultural rules prevented these people from certain rights and sometimes the relatives of the widows and orphans would forcefully deprive them of their property because of human greed. Relatives to the widow may want to seize their husband's property or deprive the orphans of their father's property especially landed property.

The widows and orphans consulted Ignatius Ndefru Nkwenti, who had been a consultant since 2003 and he took the matter to the State Counsel and the court. He sacrificed money and time going to the State Counsel and the court to defend the cases. In the cases where he intervened, the court judged in favour of the widows and orphans and the property was given back to them. He did this using his money to sponsor lawyers to protect the property rights of these under privileged class of people in Mankon.³⁷ One of the cases treated by Ignatius Ndefru Nkwenti was the widow, Pauline Awah Ncho, whose relatives to her late husband wanted to deprive her and the children from the landed property of her late husband Vincent Ncho. He also assisted the children of late Ngwa Rophina Neng of God's Will Clinic Ngomgham where one of the children wanted to own all the real estate thereby depriving the rest of the children's rights to the property. He brought in a lawyer and they went to court and the property was rationed out to all the children.

The Nkah USA branch among other social services also contributed a lot in rendering humanitarian services. They contributed financially and materially to the support of orphans and vulnerable children in Mankon especially the girl child. They organized career counselling for the girl child and gave material support like beds, mattresses and bed spreads. They also supported widows to have land titles and letters of administration. Outside Mankon, Nkah women supported homeless women and children at Bambalang after the Balikumbat-Bambalang border conflict.³⁸ The Nkah Women promoted widow's rights in obtaining letters of administration and land certificates which remained a nightmare in Mankon.³⁹ It could be remarked here that one of the major objectives of the Nkah Nikwi Ni Mankon women is to promote the rights of the education of the girl child in Mankon.⁴⁰ That was why the activities carried out were mostly focused on the girl child and women.

VIII. Conclusion

The Mankon diaspora identified themselves as partners in the transformation of the Bamenda II Municipality. They contributed in many ways in development as individuals and also collectively. Collectively, these migrants formed unions, groups or associations through which they raised funds and channelled it for development projects back home. As analysed in this article therefore, social activities of the Mankon diaspora have in many ways upgraded development in the Mankon municipality. Their social contributions to development generally were not directly productive. These social contributions have been realized through the associations created such as the MA.CU.D.A branches abroad, the Nkah USA, the MFSI in USA and the Alahkie Youths Association in South Africa. This notwithstanding some Mankon migrants at individual level also contributed to the social upgrading of the Bamenda II municipality. This was the special case of Lawrence Neba Formambuh in the health sector. Apart from taking care of people's health, he in no little way also created employment in the community. Another individual diaspora social contributor to development was the humanitarian, Ignatius Ndefru Nkwenti in his effort to protect the property rights of vulnerable widows and orphans.

From the research as presented in this article, it could be concluded that the Mankon diaspora at individual levels and through the formation of diaspora associations have been very instrumental in the social transformation of Bamenda, Cameroon between 1961 and 2021. The eloquent proof of this has been the realization of projects in the domain of infrastructural development, the Mankon Museum, construction of classrooms, culverts and ball hole water points, extension of electricity to rural areas, preservation of indigenous culture and identity, provision of scholarships, health and humanitarian services.

³⁷ Richard Ndi and Fidelis Ambe Ngwa, Lawyers to Ignatius Nkwenti, interviewed by the author, Ntarinkon, Mankon, February 3, 2019.

³⁸ Rose Asongwe and Judith Ngang, eds, "Pearl Jubilee," in *Nkah Nikwei Ni Mankon Women Magazine*, 23-25.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

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