



# 2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

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# 2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

For Cameroon

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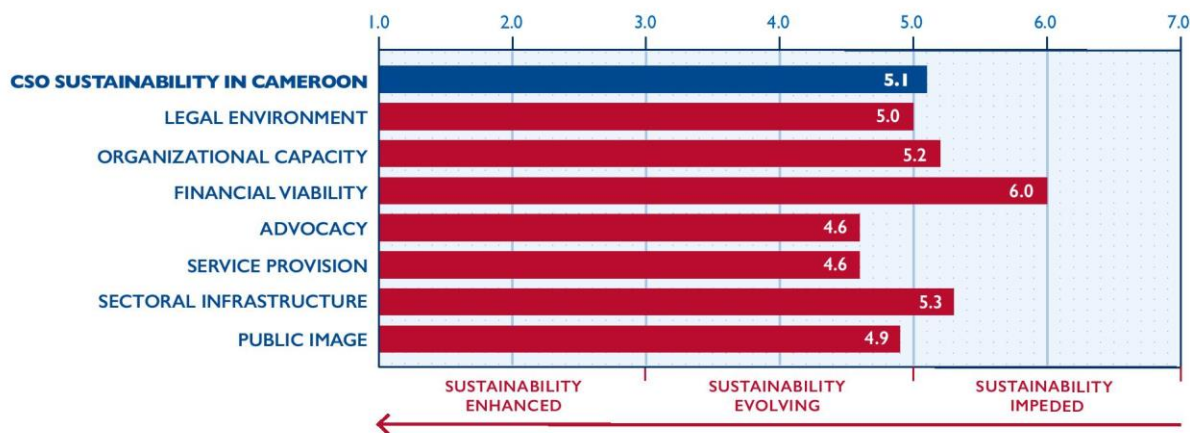
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# CAMEROON

Capital: Yaoundé  
Population: 28,524,175  
GDP per capita (PPP): \$3,642  
Human Development Index: Medium (0.563)  
Freedom in the World: Not Free (16/100)

## OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.1



Cameroon announced its first case of the COVID-19 virus on March 6, 2020. To fight the spread of the virus, the government immediately began screening passengers at airports, training health officials, preparing more patient beds, and restocking medical supplies. A response team was appointed composed of members experienced in battling Ebola. Nevertheless, by the end of the year, Cameroon had recorded more than 26,000 infections and about 500 deaths. Recognizing the important role of religious leaders in public messaging about the pandemic, Cameroonian CSOs worked with them to foster community participation, prevent stigma and discrimination, and encourage respect for human rights. The public questioned the transparency of the government's management of funds that it received for its pandemic response, including \$226 million from the International Monetary Fund, \$100 million from the African Development Bank, and several million dollars from individuals and companies.

Persistent security crises continued to ravage the Far North, East, and English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions in 2020. On February 14, twenty-two people were massacred in an attack in Ngarbuh in Ntumbaw village, Northwest Region. After the attack, the United Nations (UN) secretary general called on the Cameroonian government to open an investigation into the incident, which revealed that the massacre had been perpetrated by elements of the Cameroonian defense forces. Boko Haram suicide bombers killed seven civilians and wounded fourteen others in the town of Amchide, Kolofata District, in April. In August, Boko Haram used children to carry out a suicide attack on a camp for internally displaced persons in Nguetchéwé, in the Far North region, which killed at least seventeen civilians and injured sixteen more. In October, armed men stormed the International Bilingual Mother Francisca Academy in Kumba, Southwest Region, and slaughtered seven children with knives. Throughout the year, rebel groups in the Far North, East regions, and English-speaking Northwest and Southwest attacked local villages and seized hostages for ransom.

In December 2019, the government adopted a new decentralization law that gives special status and more local autonomy to the regions and replaces the "super mayors" appointed by the government with elected mayors. This ambitious undertaking marked a departure, at least in theory, from a powerful central administration to one that is closer to local communities and accountable and responsive to citizens' basic needs. Article 10 of the law states that the decentralized communities may implement projects in partnership with other entities, including CSOs. It is too early to assess the impact of the new law.

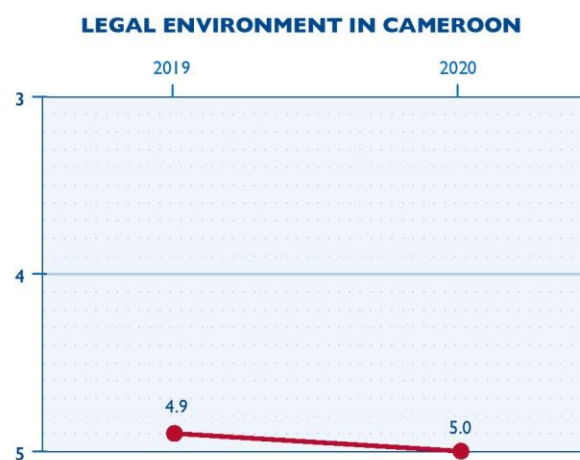
In 2020, the government banned public protests of the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC), which had continued since the 2018 re-election of President Paul Biya. The MRC's leader called on voters to boycott legislative elections in February and regional elections in December, arguing that without reform, the electoral code could not guarantee free and fair elections. The government labeled demonstrations demanding Biya's departure an "insurrectionary movement," and security forces fired tear gas and water cannons at demonstrators. According to the MRC, twenty-five party activists who helped organize the protests were arrested and awaited trial in prison at the end of the year. The ruling party won a landslide victory in December.

The Cameroonian economy shrank by 2.4 percent in 2020 because of the pandemic and the decline in global prices for oil, the country's main export, the African Development Bank reported. According to the National Institute of Statistics, the pandemic lowered the standard of living for 60 percent of the population, with the poorest groups most affected. The country ranked 149 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index and 167 out of 190 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 report. In 2020, the government adopted the National Development Strategy 2020–30, which aims to achieve "structural transformation and inclusive development" in Cameroon by developing human capital, decentralizing governance, and restructuring the economy in line with its 2009 policy document, Vision 2035.

The overall sustainability of Cameroon's CSO sector deteriorated slightly in 2020. The legal environment was slightly less enabling as the government increased its scrutiny of annual reports and showed increasing hostility to organizations working on human rights and governance. CSOs' financial viability weakened moderately as external partners decreased their support and the pandemic reduced members' ability to contribute to their organizations. CSO advocacy declined slightly, with few initiatives ending successfully. CSOs' public image was moderately poorer as the government's negative attacks on the sector influenced public perceptions. CSOs' organizational capacity, service provision, and the infrastructure supporting the sector were unchanged.

According to the National Governance Program, approximately 56,000 associations were registered in Cameroon at the end of 2020. The Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT), the government body responsible for supervising CSOs, reports that Cameroon had some forty international CSOs and approximately fifty non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a separate legal form. Nearly 500,000 grassroots community organizations, private associations, common initiative groups (that is, economic and social organizations formed by individuals with common interests), development committees, and economic interest groups were thought to exist in 2020. Many of these groups are unregistered.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.0



The legal environment for Cameroonian CSOs deteriorated slightly in 2020 with the government's increased scrutiny of annual reports and increasingly hostile attitude to organizations working on human rights and governance.

Law No. 90/053 of 1990 on freedom of association continued to govern all CSOs in 2020. In addition, NGOs are governed by Law No. 99/014 of 1999; sports associations by Law No. 2018/014 of 2018; and cooperatives and common initiative groups by Law No. 92/006 of 1992. International CSOs have the status of NGOs.

CSOs register by submitting declarations along with the minutes of their founding, statutes, internal regulations, and the names of their leaders to a MINAT divisional

office in their place of residence. The registration process is usually simple, although organizations working on governance, anti-corruption, and human rights may encounter delays or difficulties in obtaining registration receipts or be denied registration arbitrarily. These obstacles give rise to the perception that registering authorities do not apply the laws in a fair and consistent manner. The government practices "administrative tolerance" in that it allows many organizations to operate semi-legally, unable to gain full registration but conducting activities without reprisal. Registered associations that have operated for at least three years may apply to MINAT for NGO status with the consent of the Ministry of External Relations. NGOs, which are entitled to pursue aims that are in the public interest, receive certain tax benefits. Community-based and cultural organizations may operate without registration, although unregistered organizations may not interact with the government or donors. The law allows MINAT to dissolve any organization that breaches public order or state security. In the event of dissolution, organizations may appeal to administrative courts in their place of residence. No organization is known to have been dissolved in 2020.

Two new organic texts were passed and implemented in 2020: Law No. 2020/009 of July 20, 2020, which amends and supplements Law No. 90/053 of December 19, 1990, on freedom of association and gives special status to artistic and cultural associations (Article 4); and Law No 2020/011 of July 20, 2020, which adds artistic and cultural associations to political parties, unions, sports associations, and NGOs as groups governed by special laws. The laws allow individual artistic and cultural associations to join efforts as collective associations, which is expected to help revitalize Cameroon's artistic and cultural industries.

All CSOs must file annual activity reports with MINAT. This requirement is strictly enforced in the case of NGOs, particularly if they work on human rights and governance. Very few other CSOs comply with this obligation. In 2020, in an effort to force compliance, MINAT instructed all organizations to transmit annual reports from the last three years, as prescribed by law, or else face dissolution. Although few CSOs did so, MINAT did not carry out its threat.

CSOs may conduct advocacy within the legal limits designated by the government and Cameroonian law. Under Law No. 90/055, which governs meetings and public events, organizers must obtain permits for public protests and submit prior notification.

The government expressed hostility towards human rights organizations in 2020. For example, the minister of MINAT claimed that the Ten Million Northerners (10 millions de nordistes) movement, which advocates for the interests of people in the country's northern regions, aimed to divide Cameroonians. The minister called on CSOs to comply with their statutes, claiming that during the three years of unrest in the English-speaking regions, several CSOs had deviated completely from their approved goals and missions and some civil society actors were fomenting instability in the regions. In November 2020, MINAT banned all activities, publications, meetings, and demonstrations initiated or supported by the Ten Million Northerners movement.

CSOs are exempt from customs duties, value-added tax, and social charges for non-contributory social protection programs. CSOs also benefit from tax deductions on revenues from grants, donations, fees, and economic activities in conflict-affected areas of the Northwest, Southwest, and Far North regions.

Under Law No. 2019/004 of 2019 on the social economy in Cameroon, CSO may receive grants from the central and local governments, donations, bequests, and income from public fundraising campaigns. CSOs may bid on government contracts, although Decree No. 2018/366 of 2018 allows them to bid on public contracts only if their proposed prices are competitive. Law No. 90/053 specifies that associations may not earn profits, which government officials sometimes use to keep CSOs from winning public contracts in areas other than social mobilization. Only NGOs may accept foreign funding. Public utility status is granted exclusively by presidential decree and allows CSOs to benefit from state subsidies. The number of organizations with public utility status is low.

High-quality paid legal expertise is available in Cameroon, especially in large metropolitan areas, but CSOs do not usually have the financial means to pay for it. Pro bono legal counsel is unavailable.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.2

The organizational capacity of Cameroonian CSOs did not change in 2020. Many initiatives to strengthen strategic institutional issues were suspended, modified, or canceled because of the pandemic. For example, the Italian CSO Incontro fra i popoli canceled its capacity-building program for 100 CSO leaders working on international cooperation in the Far North, North, Adamawa, and Center regions. Far North CSOs that are members of the Cameroonian Humanitarian Organizations Initiative (CHOI), including the Association for the Protection of Children Removed from Their Families in Cameroon (Association pour la protection des enfants retirés de leurs familles au Cameroun), Women and Development Association (Association femmes et développement), and Green Safe Association, were unable to realize internal capacity-building plans. Most CSO training that could take place was held via video conference, which many CSOs have yet to master because of a lack of equipment, limited staff capacity, or spotty internet access.

Most CSOs identify their target groups through local contacts and surveys of people in the areas in which they intend to work. CSOs are sometimes assisted in their activities by locally elected officials. Donor-funded CSOs often carry out monitoring and evaluation exercises, but other CSOs generally lack the mechanisms, trained personnel, and funding to assess the effectiveness of their work. CSOs performed a crucial function during the

pandemic by providing necessary services and products to their constituencies. Some CSOs added new activities such as the distribution of masks, soaps, and hand-washing utensils in schools and other public places. A number of CSOs relied on videoconferencing to implement activities or communicate with partners.

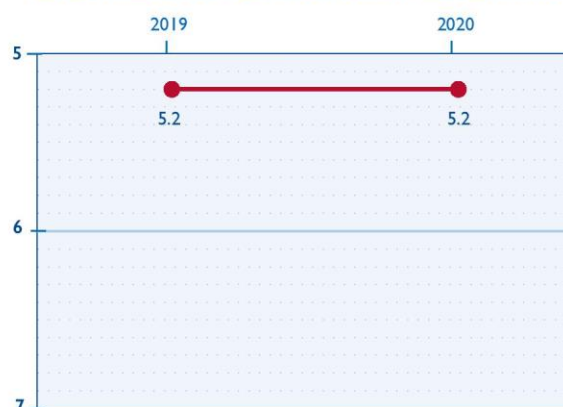
CSOs normally have statutes and internal regulations that specify their missions, target groups, and means of intervention. CSOs with good organizational capacities adhere to their stated missions, but other organizations often stray from their missions to obtain funding. This was particularly the case in 2020, as funding declined in many sectors. Some CSOs use strategic planning processes to define their priorities, but the majority of CSOs follow donors' interests and develop strategic plans simply to comply with donors' requirements. Pandemic-related travel restrictions prevented many CSOs from implementing activities in their coverage areas in 2020.

Cameroonian CSOs are usually governed internally by general assemblies, supervisory bodies, administrative councils, management bodies, and various committees and working groups. The effectiveness of these groups is varied and usually determined by a handful of active members. Only large, amalgamated networks and federations develop and follow written policies.

Larger Cameroonian CSOs usually have a paid head manager, other paid staff if funding is available, and interested volunteers. At smaller organizations, there is usually only one main employee. Staff members typically perform an assortment of tasks and tend to be fairly unskilled. CSOs often use outside providers for tasks such as data entry and printing. Since the unemployment rate is high in Cameroon, CSOs find it difficult to recruit volunteers.

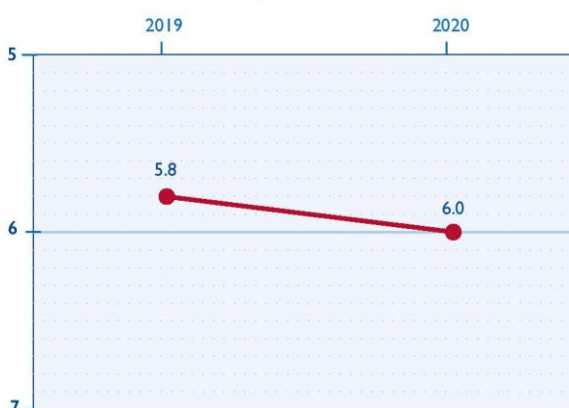
Although the internet is not consistently available throughout the country, many CSOs rely heavily on the internet to access information and conduct their work. Videoconferencing via platforms such as Zoom became more common during the pandemic. Most CSOs have rented offices, which are often not well equipped.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN CAMEROON



## FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.0

#### FINANCIAL VIABILITY IN CAMEROON



CSOs' financial viability weakened moderately in 2020 as external partners decreased their support and the pandemic reduced members' ability to contribute to their organizations.

Relatively few Cameroonian CSOs benefit from external funding. The main foreign donors supporting CSOs are the United States, France, Switzerland, Canada, France, United Kingdom, European Union (EU), UN, and World Bank. Funding from external donors was uncertain in 2020. For example, the Cameroon Association for Environmental Education (CAEE) received a grant from the German Agency for International Cooperation to carry out a study of the vulnerability to climate change of poor households in the Logone Valley. CAEE also obtained a grant from the Loudéac Community Bretagne

Center in France to support households engaged in market gardening in the Far North. But Action Against Hunger was unable to support development projects in the Far North planned by CAEE and other CSOs. A particularly important development was the closure of the Netherlands Development Organization, which had a significant impact on the CSOs for which it was a main partner. No CSOs are known to have received emergency pandemic funding from the government.

Funding support from the government is low. The government regularly supports the small number of CSOs with public utility status, which includes religious organizations and large networks such as the National Platform of Associations of Cameroon (Plateforme nationale des associations du Cameroun), Young Professionals Network (Réseau professionnel des jeunes)–Support for Digital Accessibility (Appui au désenclavement numérique, ADEN), and Confederation of Far North Region Producers (Confédération des producteurs de la région de l'Extrême-Nord). Otherwise, the government offers minimal support, citing the law on public procurement and competing national priorities as the main reasons. Municipalities also grant very little funding to CSOs, since they have been slow to assume full control of development planning and funding. Experienced CSOs often lose out on government contracts to companies that may lack qualifications but are tied into corrupt networks. CSOs that complete contracted services for the government are often not paid because of corruption, funding shortages, or management difficulties in government agencies. In 2020, the Green Safe Association had to self-finance the completion of a project to plant trees on pastoral lands degraded by deforestation in the Sudano-Sahelian zone after a contract with the Lake Chad Basin Sustainable Development Program expired before the project was finished. As a consequence of such difficulties, some CSOs have cut back on or stopped seeking government-funded activities.

Businesses do not feel motivated to fund CSOs. Several organizations with direct links to celebrities or the telecommunications companies Orange and MTN have obtained their support for projects such as orphanages, hospitals, and scholarships. CSOs sometimes ask unions, cooperatives, and self-help organizations for funding for projects to help local communities.

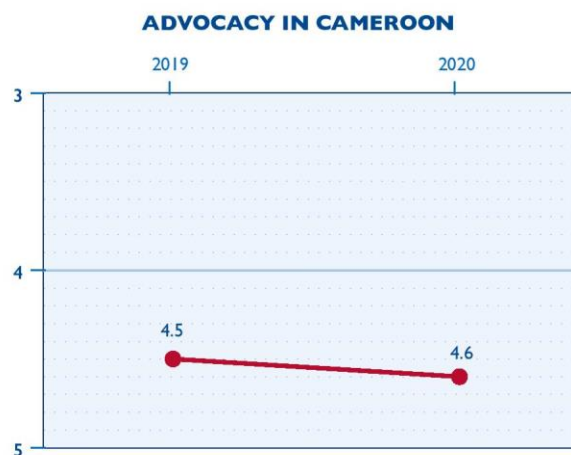
Most Cameroonian CSOs are membership-based and depend on donations from their members to survive. Because of the country's economic decline in 2020, many members had trouble paying their membership fees. Organizations such as Children's and Parents' Relays in Cameroon, Bright Smile Cameroon, Sunshine (Rayons de soleil), and Club for the Hearing Impaired (Cercle des handicapés auditifs) raise funds through charitable events or telephone campaigns. The contributions that they receive are often far less than needed. The use of social media to mobilize resources is not very common in Cameroon, although organizations such as CODAS Caritas, National Episcopal Conference, and Human Rights Defense Network for Central Africa (REDHAC) try to raise funds from their supporters through their websites. Many CSOs prefer to solicit in-kind support rather than cash donations because of the complex procedures for obtaining and reporting on donations.

CSOs rarely have specialized financial departments and instead rely on external service providers, especially if engaged in large projects involving government or foreign donors. Large CSOs have accounting manuals and perform external audits. Smaller organizations carry out self-evaluations since they cannot afford the cost of external audits. However, the practice of conducting audits is gradually spreading, although their cost remains prohibitively high.

## ADVOCACY: 4.6

Advocacy by Cameroonian CSOs weakened slightly in 2020 as few initiatives resulted in notable progress.

Several consultative frameworks offer opportunities for CSOs to interact formally with the government. In accordance with Decree No. 2013/7987/PM of 2013, CSOs take part in a participatory monitoring system meant to promote transparency in the management of public resources. CSOs are particularly active on oversight committees for the extractive industry, public finances, and elections. For example, the Young Professional Network–ADEN, One World One Future (Un monde un avenir), National Self-Managed Center for Local Economic Development (Centre autogéré national de développement économique local, CANADEL), Zenu Network, and Citizenship Dynamics (Dynamique citoyenne) sit on the committee that monitors public investments, where they oversee the proper execution of



state-funded projects and can critique poor workmanship or government actions that they deem harmful to local communities.

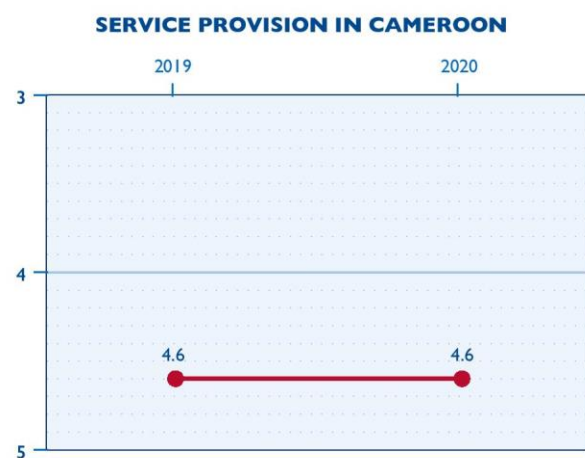
Most CSO advocacy focuses on areas such as health care, women's rights, environmental protection, the provision of basic services, and the promotion of agro-pastoral diversity. CSOs often carry out campaigns to encourage the public to hold the government more accountable. Local Youth Corner, National Youth Council of Cameroon, CODAS Caritas, Citizenship Dynamics, and the National Episcopal Conference continued to shape public policies by producing periodic studies on corruption, health care, and human rights in 2020. The Center for the Environment and Development (CED) denounced the government's attempt to expropriate and monopolize lands in the Littoral Region, and REDHAC and the Cameroonian League of Human Rights criticized the government's slow processing of persons arrested during conflicts between French and English speakers and election-related demonstrations. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom–Cameroon and the Cameroonian Women for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education platform produced a report analyzing gender conflict in Cameroon in 2020.

Other CSOs actively advocating for responsible governance in 2020 included the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Central African Forest Commission, which jointly organized the official launch of a new program to manage protected areas and biodiversity in Central Africa in September. Women-Oriented Actions for Change and Green Development Advocates (GDA) took advantage of the regional elections to raise the issue of the use of plastics in Cameroon. CSOs denounced the Ngaruh attack in Northwest Region, the Amchide attack in Kolofata District, and the massacre of children at the International Bilingual Mother Francisca Academy in Kumba, Southwest Region. Some planned advocacy initiatives could not take place because of the pandemic. For example, the second annual Land Tenure Week, led by a consortium consisting of CED, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and Anti-Hunger Network (Réseau de lutte contre la faim, RELUFA), was canceled in 2020.

CSOs usually achieve their goals by meeting with government, legislative, private-sector, and civil society representatives and developing effective communication tools, mainly for use on social media. As in-person meetings could not be held in 2020 because of the pandemic, CSOs' use of social media for advocacy purposes increased. For example, Care For Environment used the site Media Terre to raise awareness about a national training camp to prepare young people for volunteer work with environmental projects.

In 2020, CSOs worked to revise provisions of Law No. 90/053 related to CSOs' ability to accept grants, MINAT's authority to suspend and dissolve organizations, and guidelines for reporting on public events. No specific outcomes were reported.

## SERVICE PROVISION: 4.6



CSO service provision was stable in 2020. CSOs provide a wide range of services in many sectors, including health care, education, governance, water, energy, environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management, culture, and local development. Leading service providers include the Association of Skills for a Better Life, which provides free medical care and school supplies; We Care Cameroon, which works in health care; and Green Safe Association, which works on the effects of desertification and climate change on women, local populations, and disadvantaged indigenous people.

In April 2020, a number of associations, religious communities, and political parties under the leadership of the archbishop of Douala created the Civil Society COVID-19 Unit, which sought to strengthen and raise

awareness of preventative measures and provide support in the acquisition of protective equipment. The unit also highlighted the benefits of traditional medicine as a treatment for COVID-19. In all regions of the country, CSOs

distributed materials such as masks and sanitizer and raised the public's awareness of preventative measures recommended by the World Health Organization.

Several CSOs were involved in the response to the humanitarian crisis in the Northwest, Southwest, East, and Far North regions, sometimes supporting target groups in collaboration with international CSOs. In the Far North Region, for example, Public Concern, Action for Community Development, and Saheli worked with displaced persons in refugee camps or affected local communities to distribute humanitarian aid and cash, support the development of income-generating activities, and encourage reforestation through the use of firewood-saving stoves.

CSOs rigorously identify the needs and priorities of grassroots groups so they can respond to them effectively. When designing their projects, organizations typically rely on national policy documents, study reports, field experiences, household surveys, and consultations with traditional authorities and community members. Among the CSOs that respond most effectively to the needs of local communities are those that are well organized and financially strong, such as the Cameroonian Red Cross, CED, RELUFA, and Caritas Codas. Few CSOs seek to recover the costs of the services that they provide. Most CSOs are ill equipped to analyze market demand, and their target groups are generally unable to pay for services.

The government recognizes the role of CSOs in its Vision 2035 and National Development Strategy 2020–30. These documents refer to CSOs as strategic partners and underscore their role in providing social services, safeguarding national culture, achieving democratization and decentralization, and defending human rights.

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## SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.3

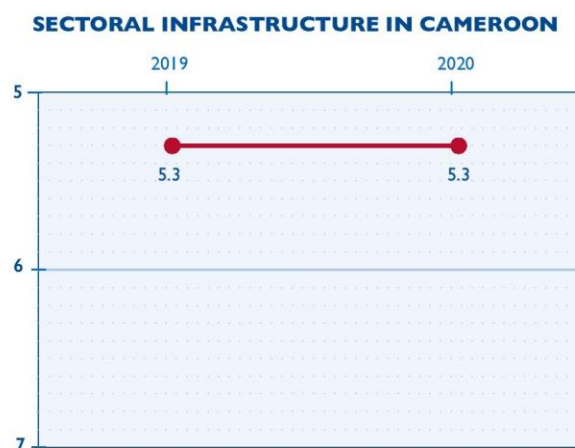
The infrastructure supporting CSOs was unchanged in 2020.

No resource centers specifically serve CSOs in Cameroon. Several intermediary support organizations (ISOs), such as Inades-Formation and the Pan African Institute for Development, host libraries and offer training, information, and computer and communications services. Faith-based CSOs, multipurpose community telecenters, and other groups also offer training and information. These facilities continued to be accessible in 2020 despite the pandemic. International CSOs are generally helpful in sharing information, and UN agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN Children's Emergency Fund provide CSOs with information and links to other organizations.

ISOs such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, UN Women, and Cuso International gave fewer grants in 2020 because of funding shortfalls. The Netherlands Development Organization closed after more than forty years of supporting CSOs in Cameroon.

Local grant-making organizations are practically non-existent in Cameroon, although in 2020, a consortium composed of CED, RELUFA, and IIED provided grants to CSOs through its Landcam Project, funded by the EU. CSOs receiving grants included CAEE and Action for Community Development, which will implement community activities to secure land tenure.

Although a spirit of cooperation is sometimes lacking, Cameroonian CSOs are gradually realizing that they need to form networks and coalitions to operate effectively, mobilize resources, and satisfy their constituents' needs. Prominent coalitions in 2020 included the Cameroonian Humanitarian Organizations Initiative, National Engagement Strategy on Land Governance, CSO Platform of the Lake Chad Basin, CSO Platform for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Fight Against Climate Change, and Network of Active Women for Community Forest Management. These coalitions stand out from other platforms for the commitment of their membership and effective operations. In general, however, civil society in Cameroon is fragmented, and CSOs lack experience and capacity in networking and coalition-building. These deficiencies deprive CSOs of the



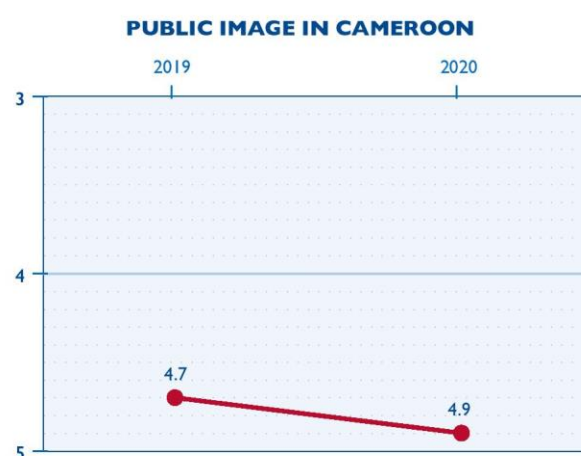
opportunity to collaborate and build trust. The pandemic has worsened this situation by reducing resources and limiting opportunities to cooperate, network, and develop skills.

Cameroon has many schools that train CSO staff in specialized areas. For example, in 2020, the National School of Social Assistance offered training to organizations working in social areas, and the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon trained executives to serve in several fields of intervention. CSOs, donors, and institutions such as the Master Pro Higher Institute of Public Management and some state universities offered online training in 2020. However, given the instability of internet connections throughout the country, this approach is viewed as a temporary measure.

Collaboration between CSOs and other sectors needs improvement. Among instances of cooperation in 2020, the Inter-Patronal Group of Cameroon facilitated ongoing cooperation between companies, trade unions, and professional groups to produce economic analysis and improve the business climate in Cameroon.

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## PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.9



The public image of CSOs was moderately worse in 2020. The public, CSOs' main beneficiary, has grown dissatisfied with CSOs' failure to offer concrete benefits in the manner of government-led public projects, which tend to be accompanied by political propaganda. In addition, as the government ratcheted up its criticism of human rights CSOs in 2020, public perceptions were adversely affected. Since they tended to lack adequate budgets for communications, CSOs found it difficult to react to this challenge with strong public outreach. CSOs fear that without the means to counteract the government's negative campaign by communicating a positive image, they will gradually become indistinguishable from political parties or opposition forces.

Media coverage of CSOs' activities did not change in 2020. Radio and television preferred to feature politicians rather than CSO experts on their debate platforms. As a result, civil society actors were generally absent from broadcasts of public discussions. In addition, publicly owned media are reluctant to cover the activities of CSOs that they consider hostile to the government, especially if they work on human rights. As a result, CSOs often turn to private media companies for coverage since they are more open to working with CSOs and have greater freedom in their editorial stances. CSOs that lack financial resources find it difficult to obtain coverage, since the media usually demand payment for coverage.

The government's view of CSOs that work in the field of human rights was hostile in 2020. In particular, the government claimed that civil society actors were complicit in fomenting instability in the English-speaking regions. In March, the minister of MINAT released a statement lambasting CSOs' criticism of government institutions. The *Journal Cameroun Tribune* quoted the minister as saying that CSOs had spread false reports aimed at tarnishing the image of the country's defense and security forces. The minister alleged, accurately, that security forces had discovered weapons, ammunition, telephones, and binoculars intended for terrorists in the humanitarian convoys of several CSOs. While the government recognizes service-providing organizations as strategic partners, its view of them was mixed if they failed to comply with their legally defined fields of activity.

Public perceptions of CSOs grew worse as media and government conspiracy theorists cast civil society actors on the side of evil in 2020. For example, civil society came under heavy criticism for working with Human Rights Watch to document the February massacre in Ngarbuh. The public tends to regard CSOs that provide services more positively. The efforts of CSOs to build awareness of the pandemic were particularly well received.

CSOs experience little conflict with companies or other private-sector actors, mainly because very few of them attempt to exercise oversight in sectors such as mining, logging, or labor. Businessmen who perceive civil society as a threat or have negative perceptions of CSOs are usually also politicians.

CSO leaders increasingly prefer to use digital technologies to communicate because of their lower cost, easier access, and fewer constraints. A few CSOs are able to harness the press effectively by appearing on televised debates. It is not uncommon for civil society stakeholders to take advantage of their television appearances to describe their activities and highlight their achievements.

Self-regulation did not progress in 2020. Small CSOs often find it difficult to project transparency in their operations, since they are commonly unable to organize general assemblies and may be run by only two or three people, which makes it difficult to ensure appropriate checks and balances. Larger CSOs with websites usually post descriptions of their activities. Annual reports are not usually made public.

***Disclaimer:*** The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.

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