



2022 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

CAMEROON
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For Cameroon

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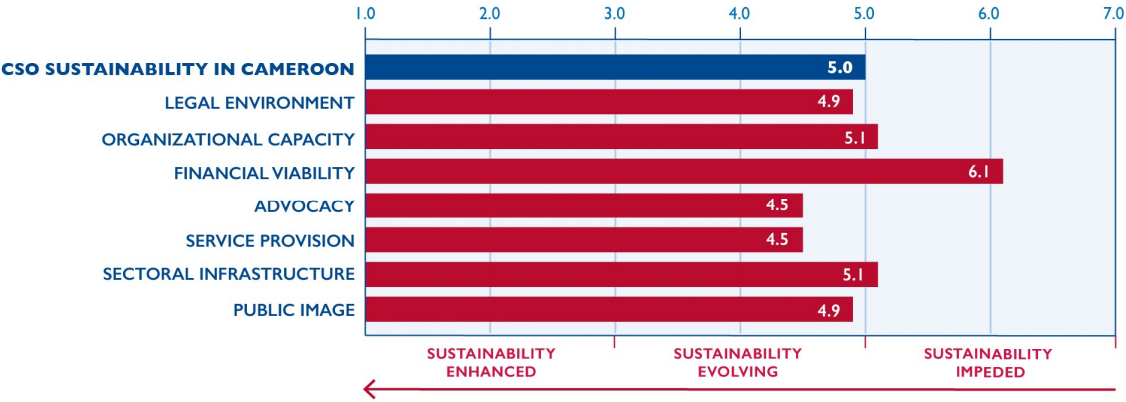
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CAMEROON

Capital: Yaoundé
Population: 30,135,732
GDP per capita (PPP): \$4,408
Human Development Index: Medium (0.576)
Freedom in the World: Not Free (15/100)

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.0



Cameroonian president Paul Biya celebrated forty years in office on November 6, 2022. At age 89, he was the fourth longest-serving and oldest head of state in the world. While his political party, the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM), organized celebrations of the occasion across the country, opposition parties voiced complaints about rigged elections, the government’s crackdown on dissent, and its failure to address corruption. At the end of the year, at least sixty-two members and supporters of the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement remained in prison after their conviction in military courts of attempted revolution, aggravated assembly, and other offenses stemming from their participation in 2020 in banned demonstrations calling for Biya’s departure. Independent journalists continued to experience threats such as arbitrary detentions and arrests, police raids, and kidnappings.

A major cholera epidemic that started in late 2021 was still active in eight regions of the country in late 2022. Nearly 15,000 cases and 298 deaths were reported. Many victims were prison inmates living in unsanitary, overcrowded conditions, including a man detained since September 2020 for participating in a peaceful demonstration against the poor state of the country’s sanitation system. The Littoral office of the Ministry of Public Health provided vaccines and assisted in the care of patients evacuated to public hospitals. CSOs helped sensitize the population to safe hygiene practices.

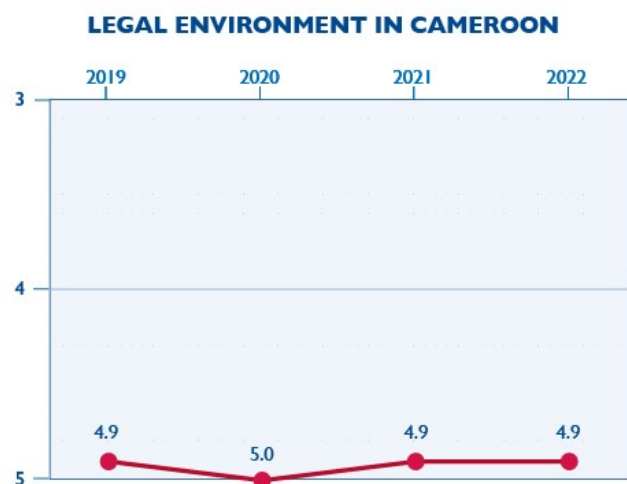
Armed violence between separatist groups and the armed forces continued in Northwest and Southwest regions in 2022. The deadlocked conflict had devastating consequences for the nearly 1 million internally displaced people (IDPs) coping with food insecurity. The efforts of humanitarian organizations were compromised by security threats and the government’s evident mistrust of them. Boko Haram militants continued to terrorize communities in Far North Region. On July 2, 2022, suspected Boko Haram fighters attacked the Mada Hospital in Logone-et-Chari Division, killing one civilian and forcing the temporary closure of the facility, which left thousands of people without essential health care.

The Cameroonian economy showed signs of recovery in 2022. The World Bank estimates that the real gross domestic product grew 4 percent, buoyed by the rising price of oil. Overall inflation was estimated at 6.2 percent. According to the 2021–2022 United Nations (UN) Human Development Index, which measures average achievements in life expectancy, education, and standard of living, Cameroon ranked 151 out of 191 countries.

The overall sustainability of Cameroon’s CSOs improved slightly in 2022. Organizational capacity was slightly stronger as CSOs expanded their involvement with constituencies in rural areas. Advocacy improved slightly as CSOs and the government came together to address issues of common concern, including public finance management reform. Service provision was slightly enhanced as CSOs worked intensively with the government to fill gaps in state services, especially in conflict-affected regions. The sectoral infrastructure was slightly stronger as CSOs showed promise of coming together in a better organized sector. CSOs’ legal environment, financial viability, and public image did not change.

The number of associations registered in Cameroon did not change appreciably in 2022. According to the National Governance Program, about 56,000 associations were registered at the end of 2021, of which 17 were recognized as being of public utility. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINAT), which oversees CSOs, reported that about 50 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a separate legal form, and 40 international CSOs were registered in 2022. According to MINAT, approximately 500,000 grassroots community organizations, private associations, joint initiative groups, development committees, and economic interest groups operated in 2022, many of which were not registered.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.9



The legal framework for CSOs was stable in 2022.

Law No. 90/053 of 1990 on freedom of association governs all CSOs. NGOs, defined as associations “accredited by administrative authorities to participate in execution of missions of general interest,” are additionally governed by Law No. 99/014 of 1999 on NGOs. International CSOs are similarly governed by the NGO law. Other laws govern sports associations, trade unions, cooperatives, common initiative groups, interbranch professional organizations, artistic and cultural associations, and trade and professional unions.

All organizations must register to acquire legal personality. The usual process is for organizations to submit applications with their statutes, internal regulations, leaders’ names, and minutes of their

constitutive assemblies to the MINAT office in their home district. The registration process is usually straightforward, although MINAT is less than diligent in processing applications from CSOs working in human rights and governance. Registration is sometimes denied, usually because the applicant does not provide all requested documentation. In some cases, organizations may appeal a denial of registration in court, although their success rate is low. Community-based and cultural organizations may operate without registration, but unregistered organizations may not interact with the government or donors.

Registered associations in operation for at least three years and working in the priority areas of law, health, sports, environmental protection, or economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian affairs may apply to MINAT for an agreement recognizing their NGO status. The agreement requires the consent of the Ministry of External Relations. Whereas associations receive funding solely from their members, NGOs, which tend to be larger organizations, may receive public subsidies, private donations, and funding from local and foreign partners and may enter into contracts with third parties to perform services for remuneration. NGOs may additionally apply for public utility status, which allows them to benefit from reduced rates for certain taxes and provides credibility in the eyes of potential beneficiaries, partners, and donors. Public utility status is granted exclusively by presidential decree. Recognition as a public utility is for an unlimited duration, whereas NGO status has a maximum duration of five years.

CSOs are required to file activity reports with MINAT at the end of each year. In practice, only CSOs with NGO status file reports so that they can continue to access international funding. International CSOs working in Cameroon are evaluated regularly by MINAT. MINAT has the authority to dissolve any organization that it deems to undermine public order or state security but is not known to have done so in 2022.

Civil society continued to be constrained in 2022. On April 22, four UN special rapporteurs sent a letter to President Biya stating their concern about repeated death threats against the president of Organic Farming for Gorillas, a Cameroonian CSO that has accused businesses in Northwest Region of encroaching on land owned by small farmers. The government is not known to have responded to the letter. On August 11, soldiers arrested a prominent Anglophone peace activist and, without charging him, told him that he was accused of “encouraging terrorism” because of a video in his cell phone showing a Cameroonian soldier in the English-speaking regions

allegedly committing human rights abuses. As of December 2022, the activist was still in detention awaiting trial. On April 6, Doctors Without Borders officially announced the cessation of its activities in Southwest Region after the government accused it of supporting secessionism and arrested two employees.

Registered CSOs are exempt from customs duties, value-added tax, and social charges for non-contributory social protection programs. They also benefit from tax deductions on revenues from grants, donations, fees, and economic activities in conflict-affected areas of Northwest, Southwest, and Far North regions. Unregistered CSOs are not eligible for these exemptions, but they sometimes benefit from other tax incentives, such as donor's ability to deduct donations and sponsorships from their taxable income. NGOs and organizations with public utility status are entitled to additional tax benefits.

Registered associations depend solely on their members' contributions for funding. NGOs, including organizations with public utility, may accept private donations, bequests, and funding from foreign partners. NGOs may also engage in public procurement and enter into contracts with public authorities and businesses. Only organizations with public utility status may receive public subsidies, which are generally granted in a transparent manner. Law No. 99/014 allows NGOs to charge fees for goods and services, but most other CSOs may not carry out income-generating activities. Cameroonian law is silent on the creation of social enterprises.

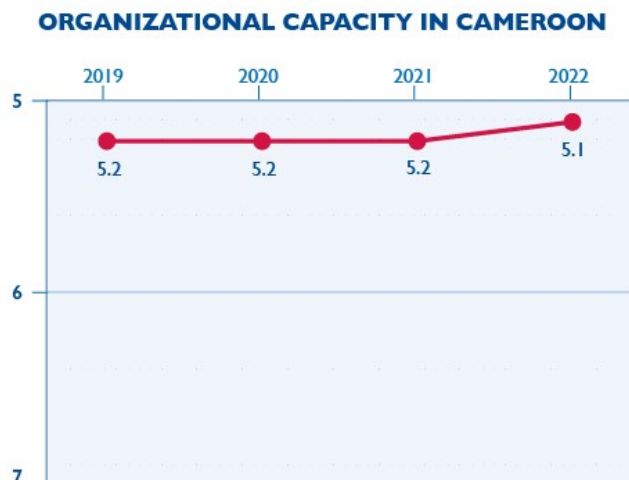
CSOs have access to legal advice in Yaoundé and elsewhere but usually consider it unaffordable. Pro bono legal counsel is not available.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.1

CSOs' operational capacity improved slightly in 2022 as CSOs extended their involvement with constituencies in rural areas.

Cameroonian CSOs have improved their outreach in many sectors, particularly rural development. National NGOs such as Support Service for Local Development Initiatives (Service d'appui aux initiatives locales de développement, SAILD), Association for the Promotion of African Community Initiatives, and African Institute for Economic and Social Development opened branches in North, Adamawa, East, South, and Southwest regions, where they have traditionally been underrepresented. These centers provide training in agricultural, fishing, and farming techniques and business management. In 2022, USAID launched the five-year Strengthening Civil Society and Community Resilience (PARC) project, which will provide thirty strategic Cameroonian partners with mentoring, training, and learning along with networking and advocacy opportunities so that they can respond flexibly to community needs and violent extremism in the Far North.

On the grassroots level, new professional organizations and grassroots groups worked with agricultural producers, livestock breeders, and other actors to conduct joint economic activities. For example, dairy farmers in the Ngaoundéré area of Adamawa Region have formed a federation to provide a single point of contact for the dairy factory. Village development committees are making important contributions to the development of their communities by opening and maintaining rural roads, supplying drinking water, and constructing and equipping schools and health facilities. Women and young people organized themselves into associations and networks to carry out successful projects in areas such as poultry farming, cattle breeding, and market gardening. Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch, a community-based organization in Oku that has expanded to Northwest and West regions, held a two-day celebration of World Youth Day at which young people and organizations, including Eco-Friendly Generation, World Economy Skills, and Agro Development, and North West Bee Farmers Messenger, exhibited eco-products. Although agricultural producers remained poorly organized in Cameroon, these new initiatives helped them improve their incomes and protect themselves against administrative and police



abuses. They also buttressed the efforts of the government and donors to structure the beginnings of a livestock sector.

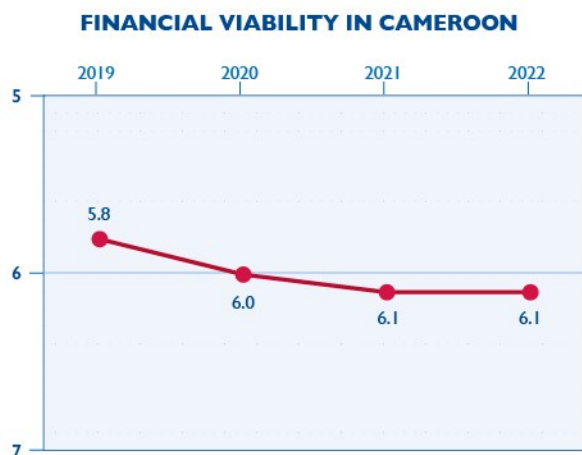
CSOs are normally expected to adhere to their missions as defined at the time of registration. In practice, organizations sometimes step into other areas if funding is available. This happened, for example, in Northwest and Southwest regions, where most organizations now focus solely on humanitarian activities, no matter what their original missions, because of the availability of donor support. While most CSOs do not engage in meaningful strategic planning, some organizations are beginning to integrate strategic plans into their decision-making processes and define organizational values.

Although the law does not prescribe specific organizational structures, at the time of registration the authorities confirm that CSOs' internal structures comply with democratic principles. CSOs typically consist of a management body and one or two decision-making bodies, such as a general assembly and a board of directors, working alone or in tandem. With the establishment of national and regional tiers, certain CSOs, such as the Group of Businesswomen of Cameroon (Groupement des femmes d'affaires du Cameroun, GFAC) and the Cameroonian Entrepreneurs Movement (Mouvement des entrepreneurs du Cameroun, MECAM), have taken on denser managerial structures. A small number of NGOs and larger CSOs that receive donor funding have statutes and defined internal policies prescribing administrative and financial management procedures.

Well-established organizations usually offer staff contracts and job descriptions, which they design themselves or adapt from online sources. Most organizations lack human resource manuals. Most CSO employees work at reduced wages, which can undermine staff performance and motivation. Staff are often looking for better opportunities elsewhere, and once they leave an organization, less experienced staff take their place, causing organizations to have to continuously reinvest in capacity building. The majority of CSOs rely on volunteers to reduce their operating costs.

The majority of CSOs face a fairly large infrastructure deficit coupled with weak technical capacity. Many CSOs lack acceptable offices with sufficient space, equipment, and internet access. Some organizations lack offices altogether and work out of private houses. Many offices do not accommodate people with disabilities.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.1



CSOs' financial viability was unchanged in 2022.

Most NGOs in Cameroon depend on support from foreign partners. The major donors include the UN, European Union (EU), and United States. Much of the funding goes to humanitarian assistance for IDPs, their host communities, and other populations in conflict-affected areas. In 2022, USAID and UN agencies partnered with international CSOs, such as the International Rescue Committee, Alliance for International Medical Action, and Première Urgence Internationale, to provide health care, water, hygiene products, and other critically needed services. In March 2022, USAID launched the \$11 million PARC project to strengthen CSOs' ability to advocate for citizen rights and service provision, address the marginalization of

women and youth, and respond to the restriction of civic space in northern communities. PARC is implemented by FHI 360 in cooperation with local partners.

Cameroonian CSOs sometimes receive funding directly from foreign donors. For example, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF) and Community Initiative for Sustainable Development serve as implementing partners of the UN Population Fund in assisting vulnerable groups, especially women, in Northwest and Southwest regions. Funded projects focused on natural resource governance, the monitoring of local public finances, the

quality of public services, and free access to primary education. The program's COVID-19 component, which provided financial support to eleven CSO networks during the pandemic, closed in July 2022.

Funding from the government is very limited. Experienced NGOs compete for government contracts but often lose out to companies tied into corrupt networks and lacking qualifications. CSOs that manage to obtain government contracts are often not paid because of corruption, funding shortages, or poor management at government agencies.

Most CSOs are membership-based and depend on membership fees for income. Because of the high cost of living, many CSOs experienced a drop in the payment of membership fees in 2022. Some organizations carry out income-generating activities, such as the production and sale of embroidery, paid consultancies, or the leasing of office space, to help realize their objectives. CSOs occasionally obtain sponsorships from celebrities or other public figures or support from international firms such as Orange and MTN.

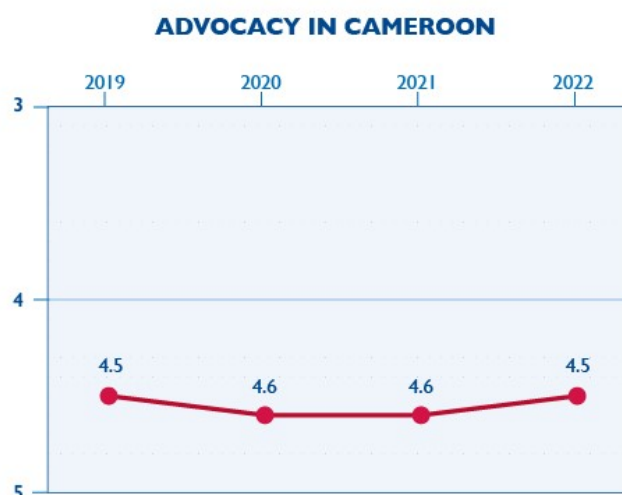
CSOs rarely have specialized financial departments. They sometimes rely on external service providers, especially if they engage in large projects involving foreign donors. Large CSOs have accounting manuals and perform external audits. NGOs must be audited annually by independent private auditors and submit activity reports with financial statements to the government. Smaller organizations carry out self-evaluations because they cannot afford the cost of external audits.

ADVOCACY: 4.5

Advocacy improved slightly in 2022 as CSOs and the government worked together on several new initiatives, including a forum on public finance management reform. Advocacy by CSOs in Cameroon is still in its infancy. Platforms are occasionally created to bring together citizens' groups, but they remain informal and poorly organized and are not yet able to interact effectively with authorities at the national or local levels. Cameroonian law prohibits CSOs from conducting activities to influence public opinion, policy, or legislation. These constraints limit CSOs' ability to engage in advocacy, especially on issues that the government sees as politically sensitive or as challenging its authority.

Nevertheless, CSO-government relations took a step forward in October 2022 with a forum on public finance management reform and the welfare of citizens organized by the Ministry of Finance. The forum was attended by ministry officials and organizations such as the Collective of NGOs for Food Security and Rural Development (Collectif des ONG pour la sécurité alimentaire et le développement rural, COSADER), Afro Leadership, and National Platform of Cameroonian CSOs (Plateforme nationale des organisations de la société civile du Cameroun, PLANOSCAM). Meeting participants discussed ways to better include CSOs in the oversight of public finances and build partnership between CSOs and the Ministry of Finance. The ministry acknowledged that CSOs are important actors, and participants agreed to continue the discussion and follow up on reforms. CSOs hope that the forum will lay the foundation for a more structured dialogue between civil society and the government and more effective CSO interventions in public financial management. In addition, CSOs such as the Association for Integrated Development and Interactive Solidarity (Association pour le développement intégré et la solidarité interactive, ADISI-Cameroon) sit on the Public Investment Budget Oversight Committee, where they help oversee the implementation of projects.

In environmental advocacy, two accredited members of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, SAILD in Yaoundé and Ajemalebu Self Help in Limbé, organized a workshop in March 2022 to develop an advocacy plan for agroecology in Cameroon. The workshop was undertaken in partnership with the Centre d'actions et de réalisations internationales in France. In addition to CSOs, representatives of the ministries of agriculture and rural



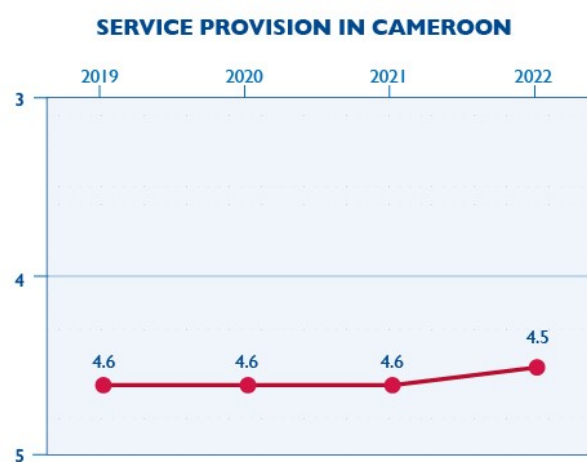
development, environment and nature protection, and scientific research and innovation also attended. Meeting participants agreed to urge state and local authorities to include agroecology in their efforts to combat desertification.

Law 2019/024 on the general code of decentralized local authorities recommends that CSOs be involved in decision making in a consultative capacity, and the law seems to be bearing fruit. Several CSOs worked with local councils in 2022. For instance, the Independent Platform of Youth for Democracy and an Active Citizenry (Plateforme indépendante des jeunes pour la démocratie et la citoyenneté active, PIJEDECA) collaborated with local councils in Douala to provide new and effective responses to problems associated with civic participation and the social and political mobilization of young people. Many CSOs continued to partner with local councils on using community radio to broadcast information on various issues, such as gender-based violence.

Women's organizations engaged in active advocacy in 2022. A major event was an intergenerational communal dialogue on promoting a culture of peace in conflict-affected regions, which took place in January 2022. The event was organized by the Cameroon Women's Peace Movement and brought together participants of diverse backgrounds and religious orientations to map out endogenous strategies for building peace in local communities in Southwest Region. The information captured during the event was used to produce manuals and handbooks for peacebuilding. The project was funded by the Canadian High Commission in Cameroon. The Center for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Africa organized two capacity-building workshops in Northwest Region in May 2022 to strengthen community leaders' involvement in combating violence against women and girls. The workshops concluded with participants' commitment to work together to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in their communities and to share the knowledge and skills they had acquired with other community members.

Cameroonian CSOs did not take action to change the legal framework for their work in 2022.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.5



Service provision improved slightly in 2022 as CSOs worked more intensively with the government to fill gaps in state services.

CSOs provide services in areas such as education, health care, housing, water, energy, environmental protection, local development, and population control. Smaller organizations tend to focus on capacity building, health care, and finance. In 2022, many organizations, including the Alliance for International Medical Action, INTERSOS, LUFMEF, and Reach Out, cooperated with the government to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, including children, women, persons with disabilities, and IDPs and others in conflict-affected areas. For example, the Cameroonian Red Cross Society and the Ministry of Health partnered to provide COVID-19 vaccination

services to people in remote areas of Northwest and Southwest regions. The Cameroonian Association for the Promotion of Education and Development (CAPED) and the Ministry of Education collaborated in providing educational support to children in rural areas of East Region. The Cameroonian Network of Human Rights Organizations (Réseau camerounais des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme, RECODH) and the Ministry of Justice worked together to provide legal aid to people who had been victims of human rights abuses in Douala.

With the end of the pandemic, most organizations were able to pursue their normal activities in water and hygiene and other areas. However, the United Nations Children's Fund was forced to suspend its water and sanitation programs and food assistance in Northwest and Southwest regions because of security-related lockdowns in May, which affected as many as 1 million people.

CSOs usually provide goods and services that target community priorities. They often determine these priorities through sociological analysis based on direct observation or discussions with community leaders and other groups.

Membership associations usually provide goods and services exclusively to their members. NGOs target larger audiences based on factors such as need or geographic location. CSOs do not discriminate on the basis of gender or race in providing goods and services.

As nonprofit entities, CSOs offer their products and services free of charge and usually do not engage in commercial activities. Although registered associations are supposed to depend solely on their members' contributions for funding, informally, they increasingly sell their services or contract with private companies, international organizations, and other partners. CSOs are somewhat aware of market demand and the ability of target groups to pay for their services.

The technical ministries with which CSOs work regularly send letters of congratulations and encouragement to their civil society partners. MINAT sends letters to acknowledge the receipt of CSOs' activity reports at the end of each year. Government officials occasionally make public statements praising CSOs.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.1

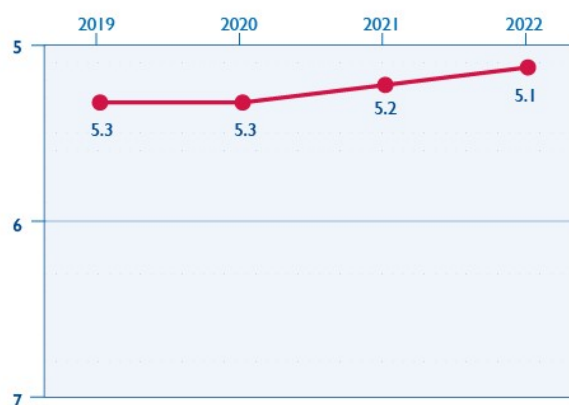
The sectoral infrastructure was slightly stronger in 2022 as CSOs showed promise of coalescing into a better organized sector.

No resource centers serve CSOs in Cameroon. Intermediary support organizations serving CSOs at the national level include the EU's Support for Active Citizenship (PROCIVIS) program and international CSOs authorized to operate in Cameroon, including the International NGO Safety Organization and Norwegian Refugee Council. These organizations offer internet access and training, but the internet services are typically paid. CSOs located in remote areas often find it expensive in terms of time and money to travel to access services offered by these organizations, which are based in Yaoundé. CSOs also rely on telecenters operated by mobile telephone companies such as MTN, Orange, and Nextel and community radio stations that serve as communications relays.

CSOs made headway in coordinating their work through networks and other platforms in 2022. Their progress was particularly evident in the growing number of grassroots organizations focused on rural development. The work of these groups was complemented and strengthened by professional federations and interbranch professional organizations, such as the Cameroon Network of Horticulturists (Réseau des horticulteurs du Cameroun, RHORTICAM), Interprofessional Council for Cocoa and Coffee (Conseil interprofessionnel du cacao et du café, CICC), National Confederation of Cotton Producers of Cameroon (Confédération nationale des producteurs de coton du Cameroun, CNPC), and Association of Banana Growers of Cameroon (Association bananière du Cameroun, ASSOBAACAM), which organized trainings for their members and facilitated the sale of their products. The PROCIVIS program offered workshops to twenty-two networks to share good practices on functioning effectively as a network and to strengthen knowledge about various areas of intervention.

The sector enjoyed several important training opportunities in 2022. The Digital Activism for Resilient Communities program, which aims to help networks and organizations use digital platforms more effectively, brought together CSOs, activists, journalists, and trainers to form a strong community able to engage in advocacy for democratic rights and norms. Under this program, the West Africa Civil Society Institute, in partnership with TechSoup Europe, launched a French version of Hive Mind, an online training and community of practice platform for social activism, with relevant localized educational content for Cameroonian CSOs. The Cameroon Association of Senior Technicians and Rural Engineers benefited from a training course offered by a gender mainstreaming project of the International Organization of la Francophonie. USAID's PARC project began to offer capacity

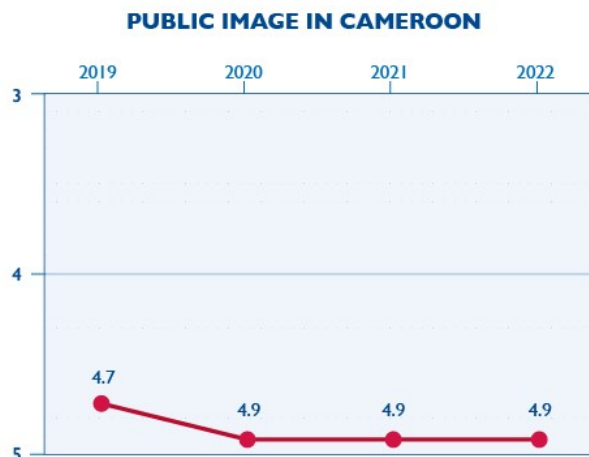
SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN CAMEROON



building to help CSOs in Far North region counter the marginalization of women and youth and build resilience to violent extremism.

In intersectoral partnerships, the Sixteen Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence attracted many women-led CSOs across the country, including Women’s Horizons (Horizons Femmes) and Woman’s Smile (Sourire de femme) in Yaoundé and LUKMEF in Buea. The event was organized by the Ministry of Women Empowerment with technical and financial support from the UN Population Fund. At a workshop in 2022 attended by government representatives and media, Horizons Femmes presented an activity report describing types of violence against sex workers and cataloging the number of cases between September 2021 and October 2022.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.9



The public image of CSOs was stable in 2022.

CSOs typically receive little coverage in public or private media, which are more concerned with the country’s insecurity than with civil society activities. However, human rights groups such as Un Monde Avenir have begun to report to the media in the same way as politicians, and mainstream media are beginning to cover their issues. The activities of cultural associations are often given space in both state and private media. Many CSOs view private news outlets as being more independent than state-run media. CSOs that lack financial resources find it difficult to obtain coverage, since it is usually paid.

The public’s view of CSOs is mixed. Organizations such as the Network of Local NGOs in Southeast Cameroon

(Réseau des ONG locales du sud-est du Cameroun, ROSE), which focuses on local involvement in rural development and natural resource management, are seen as having a direct and positive impact on the lives of beneficiaries. Other organizations are considered useless, in part because of the public’s still limited understanding of the sector’s nature and role. In addition, the large number of organizations created in recent years in Far North, Northwest, and Southwest regions has created the impression that CSOs do not serve the public interest but are instruments to enrich the few. After hearing comments on social media and the government’s allegations against Doctors Without Borders, some people doubted CSOs’ impartiality and believed that their involvement in peacebuilding efforts in Northwest Region were actually contributing to the war economy.

Government and business views of CSOs are similarly mixed. Some human rights CSOs, such as the Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (Réseau des défenseurs des droits humains en Afrique Centrale, REDHAC), are accused of being political actors seeking to destabilize the government. Organizations working in fields of interest to the government, especially service provision, are generally tolerated by government officials and rarely seen as a threat.

Many CSOs inform the public about their work through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp. CSOs in urban areas often live-stream their training workshops and conferences on Facebook or YouTube. Cameroonian CSOs increasingly organize press conferences and invite journalists to cover their activities. For instance, on April 5, 2022, the Collective of Civil Society Actors, the Informal Sector, and Opinion Leaders (Collectif des acteurs de la société civile, du secteur informel et des leaders d’opinion) organized a press conference to denounce the high cost of living and appeal for a general strike if the authorities did not act.

A few organizations make their activity reports available to the authorities. Otherwise, there are few self-regulatory mechanisms to ensure CSO transparency. Few organizations distribute their financial records or share their activity reports with the public.

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