ICT4D?

Social Media and Small Media use during the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon.

BY

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Lists of Acronyms

ICT4D = Information and communication Technologies for Development

ComDev = Communication for Development

SMS = Short messages service

ICT = Information and Communication Technologies

CNN = Cable News Network

ABC = American Broadcasting Company

CBS = Columbia Broadcasting system

UN = United Nations

BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation
Abstract

This project analyses the role of social media and small media use during the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon by projecting social media as a product of new ICTs used to bring positive social change. An argument is raised to address some of the inadequacies that have centered around social media and protest with a focus on the Anglophone crisis. Questions aim at highlighting the positive and negative role of social media use, the role played by the Cameroonian diaspora’s “online activism” and how small media use served as an alternative medium in maintaining crisis status quo during the internet ban. The study suggests a combination of social and small media for community development and social change using theories of media affordances and participation in combination with qualitative ethnographic research methods (participant observation, interviews and online survey). It concludes that even though social media are very powerful tools for information sharing, their shortcomings in protests cannot be overlooked as the success of online activism greatly relies on offline action and the use of small media greatly complements social media use as platforms for alternative discourse. The research concludes that social media (online) activism without ground action (offline) is not enough to achieve development and social change.

Key words:

ICT4D, Social media, small media, activism, diaspora.
I. Introduction

“….did all this tweeting and re-tweeting really matter when it came to influencing collective action, mobilizing and coordinating people on the ground? Or was all this just an activist delusion: a way of feeling part of the action while in fact always standing on the sidelines?” (Gerbaudo, 2012:2)

Social media and protests have raised many debates concerning the role of technological advancements in modern societies. Most often the focus has been on how new trends in ICTs have enabled development in societies. The positive sides of social media have been praised but enough emphasis has not been placed on its shortcomings. Discourses relating to social media’s contribution to development have celebrated its tools used for liberating purposes but little has been done to highlight the complexities of contemporary protests in an age of social media (Dencik and Leistert, 2015:1). This research attempts to address some of the shortcomings around discussions on social media and protests using the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon as an example. The study also analyzes the role of social media and small media during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon with social media being projected as a product of modern technology which is going to save societies if adopted. Shirky (2010:22) regards innovations as a continuation of older forms of communication which have just been enabled by “newer tools” and according to her, “revolution doesn’t happen when society adopts new technology, it happens when society adopts new behavior”.
‘Small media’ is a term which will be used predominantly in this study to represent other forms of alternative media which are used, controlled and reproduced by small groups. The general term “alternative media” has been mostly used to describe social media platforms and social media describes sites and services used on the digital web with 2.0 technologies (Askanius and Gustafsson, 2000:23–24). An argument is raised to debate the pros and cons of social media use in protests as well as to emphasize on the inclusion of small media like leaflets, graffiti, and audiocassettes in discourses of alternative media (Spitulnik, 2000:148).

Analyzing the impact of social media use during the Anglophone crisis from an ICT4D perspective, one is left with overwhelming questions: How can social media positively or negatively impact communication for development? Questions addressed in this research include;

1. How does social media use affect protests: What role does the Cameroonian diaspora play in online activism regarding the Anglophone crisis and to what extend do they serve as intermediaries between the online and offline communities?
2. How do social media and small media use complement each other in maintaining the crisis status quo and filling information gaps?
3. What are the long-term goals of the Diasporas and the government regarding the future of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and what can be done to effectively use communication technologies to bring development and social change to Cameroon?

It is impossible to carry out a study on communication patterns in Africa without paying attention to the way Africans communicate which is largely informal and unconventional. In order to understand digital activism in Africa it is important to conceptualize the concept within a framework that takes into account the continent’s cultural, historical, geopolitical backgrounds (Mutsvairo, 2016:7)
In most authoritarian African governments where press censorship is the order of the day, citizens turn to rely on street talk and rumors amongst other local communication modes. Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu (2002:8) call it “radio trottoir” or rumor mill. In this study, the word “small media” is used to describe all small interpersonal communication modes, which are neither mainstream nor technologically enabled. Alternative media like social media, which are commonly discussed are antithetical to mainstream media but they can use similar technologies; Small media are informal and non-conventional (Spitulnik, 2000:148).

Social media have been largely praised for their ability to promote open sharing of information and participation hence theories of openness and affordances and participation are used to understand the role of social media in protests. Openness is the extent to which information is available and can be shared by users even though this might only be to an extend as much information can still be kept a secret from users and saved in non-digital forms which cannot be shared, according to Heeks (2017:51). The question we should be asking therefore is to what extent is the internet or social media free?

The theory of participation is used in this study because participation has been considered a core concept in new media studies and very essential in alternative and new media discourses. It is only through participation that people become active agents in making meaning of issues that concern them and new media create alternative platforms which enable interactivity which in turns promotes participatory democracy (Lievrouw, 2017:14). Hence, the fundamental aim of empowering people to handle challenges and influence the direction of their own lives is inherent in participation (Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009:4).

Theories of media openness and affordances are used to argue against the assumption that open sharing of information on social media is always a good thing without considering the negative repercussions its use can have in some situations. Moreover, social media are not as free as we sometimes consider them to be. What happens then if the authorities control the public sphere, how will activists coordinate in the face of media gate keeping and censorship? (Tufekci, 2017:25).
To what extent then are social media free and open when it comes to the Anglophone crisis. The Anglophone problem is rooted in the history of the country and we will look at its post-colonial background to shed more light on the origin of the problem, the beginning of repressive government rule in the country, how the crisis started and how social media eventually got involved.

**Background of Study**

**a. What is the Anglophone crisis?**

“The Anglophone crisis” has recently dominated the political scene of Cameroon and poses a major challenge to the efforts of the post-colonial state to forge national unity. The Anglophone problem can be described as a socio-political dispute, which started back in the post-colonial history of the country. The root of this problem can be traced to the Foumban conference of 1961 that united the two territories (English and French Cameroon) with different colonial legacies into one state, which has led to arguments for and against separation and or federalism (Piet and Francis, 1997)

With more than 200 ethnic languages being used among the country’s 10 provinces, the most disturbing fact, which has led to recent protests, is the major disparity between the use of English and French as official languages of the country with the Anglophones feeling marginalized by the French system. Cameroon was formed in 1961 through a "marriage" which was essentially a Francophone affair imposed upon reluctant Anglophones after the French and British colonies in the country merged to form a diverse entity that was majority Francophone (Nicodemus, 2000).

Eight of the ten regions of the country speak French and use a legal system based on the French law while the remaining two regions of the country are Anglophones who employ British common law and speak English. According to the country's constitution, both French and English are official languages and hold the same status but the majority of

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1 “The Foumban conference” has been described as the marriage between West and East Cameroon. The delegation from the West and East of Cameroon met in Foumban to decide on the future of the country. (The infortainer June 2013)
government businesses and administration presently are done in French hence Anglophones have always complained of marginalization (Nyamnjoh, 2004). They also complained that the region has not benefitted from all the economic benefits which the country has made both within the country and from external colonial sources.

Events leading up to the crisis started in October 2016 with protests between lawyers and teachers in the Anglophone regions who were protesting against the use of French rule in their courts and schools. During these peaceful protests, the government security forces brutalized the lawyers (Kieron Monks, CNN News updated 2 January 2018).

Protests on the ground soon gained momentum when the Diaspora "hijacked" the struggle and began spreading information about the crisis online on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The government immediately banned internet connection in the area from January 2017 to April 2017.

The ban on the internet had very negative consequences both on the crisis and on the people and it was the most drastic move made by the government in a bid to crack down on protests, (Mail online 7 December 2017).
This caught the attention of Edward Snowden and gave rise to the widely use Twitter hashtag #BringBackOurInternet

The ban on the internet enraged the population more and led to more online mobilization, military brutality and deaths. As Patrice Nganang wrote on Facebook:

"It will probably take another political regime to make the state understand that the machine gun cannot stem a movement,"

"Only change at the head of the state can settle the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon," he said, (Mail online 7 December 2017)

The results of the spread of information online led to more intensified protests offline with demands by citizens for the government to reinstall their internet.

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2 Edward Snowden is a 31 year old US citizen, former Intelligence Community officer and whistleblower (The courage foundation May 2018)

3 Patrice Nganang is Cameroonian author and New York University Literature teacher. A Cameroonian critic who was among activists who were arrested on account of the Anglophone crisis upon his arrival at the country's international airport in the economic region of the country, Douala, and the reason for his arrest was due to a post he had shared on Facebook and his several other publications which criticized the president of the country, President Paul Biya. (BBC news December 2017)
b. **Research Questions**

1. How does social media use affect protests: What role does the Cameroonian Diaspora play in online activism regarding the Anglophone crisis and to what extent do they serve as intermediaries between the online and offline communities?

2. How do social media and small media use complement each other in maintaining the crisis status quo and filling information gaps?

3. What are the long-term goals of the Diasporas and the government regarding the future of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and what can be done to effectively use communication technologies to bring development and social change to Cameroon?

II. **Literature review**

c. **Critique of modern ICTs.**

This research argues that even though modern advancements in digital technologies have facilitated rapid communication through the web, the use of social media (being one of them) in protests does not necessarily guarantee social change and development as the success of online activism is reliant on several factors especially on effective coordination with offline activities (Mutsavairo, 2016:12). Some scholars have investigated this
assumption and literature available remains largely unclear on the direct role of modern technologies use on development. McNamara (2012:1) suggests that much of this could maybe owe to the fact that there is a lack of in-depth research and clarity regarding the conceptualization of ICT on developmental projects in particular contexts. Some conceptual frameworks on the role of ICT on development have been proposed but there is a lack of important aspects that can provide a more comprehensive picture (Kleine, 2013:3).

The use of ICTs for development gives positive hope and a belief that ICTs can make the world a better place but Unwin (2017:156-157) suggests that these technologies are not all good and are designed with particular interests in mind, which are mostly driven by the profit-making sector. He agrees that as with all technologies, they can be used for positive or negative reasons depending on the motives of the designers and users. Unwin (2017) focuses his attention on the poor and marginalized and how access to the internet can potentially lead to development for them or not. He decries the “dark side” of the internet and some social media activities, which have negative economic, financial and psychological impacts on people.

The primary concern is on strengthening marginalized groups in regions that are now beginning to enter the so-called information age instead of just providing them with access to ICT. Therefore ICTs are seen as a tool, not an end and the use of social media serves as a catalyst to improve interconnectedness, promote positive social change and contribute to national development (Uimone, 2001); (Granqvist, 2005:285-287); (Orlikowski and Iacano, 2001); (Sein and Harindranath, 2007:2-3); (Sein and Harindranath, 2007:3).

Furthermore, Unwin (2017:5) recognizes the need for governments, the private sector and the civil society to work collaboratively together in partnerships that will help deliver more effective impacts.

d. Social media use in crisis, an appraisal.

The important role played by social media in protests cannot be undermined. Revolutions have happened in the past before the advent of social media but what makes recent
revolutions special is how citizens have communicated in moments of historic crisis, the mediums they have used and the manner in which messages are broadcasted in an instantaneous manner free of deadlines and censorships typical of traditional news sources (Beaumont, 2011).

How have social media platforms become involved in protests? Poell and Van Djick (2018:1) throw more light on how the use of social media shapes the atmosphere of protests. Through their study of social media practices, they find out that leadership and collective identities play a great role in online contention, and the use of social media shapes the activities of protests. Social media in crisis that have happened lately around the world has been used as an intervening variable in public mobilization and a case which cannot be left unmentioned was the use of social media during the 2012 US presidential election.

The use of social media in other crisis events in different countries like the Arab spring in North Africa, the middle East and the case in question, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon all present different variables in terms of access to ICTs, an elite user population and the poverty margin (Berenger, 2013:2).

Another good example of a case where citizens have successfully used the power of sharing on social media and mobilization to hold their government accountable and oust their president out of power is the Tunisian Revolution of 2011.

In these crises, social media use seems crucial in presenting an alternative medium in countries which experience gross press censorship. Facebook has served as an alternative platform channeling the discourses, which cannot be carried out on traditional mainstream media (Poell and Van Dijck, 2015:527). We have seen the power of video and picture imagery, and open discussions of sensitive topics taking place on social media.

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4 The campaign of team Obama seemed to have set the watermark in social networking and outreach and what seems to have contributed greatly to his victory could be attributed to the use of social media many years prior to the election by team Obama as opposed to his opponent (Berenger, 2013:2)

5 Facebook was huge”, he says. Koubaa argues that social media during Ben Ali’s dictatorship existed on two levels. “A few thousand geeks like him communicated via Twitter, while perhaps two million talked on Facebook. Activism of the first informed the latter” (Beaumont, 2011)
Investigating examples of citizen media production and communication through social media and blogs in Tanzania, Ekström, Høg Hansen and Boothby (2012:164-165), identify four main categories that describe the ecology of communication through social media during the bomb blast in Dar Es salaam Tanzania. They argue that social media forums tended to be used as a way of mobilizing help for victims, as a way to search for answers and share information and rumor, as a platform for criticizing the government and military and to question the lack of information and failure of established news media to conduct a serious trustworthy job in covering the biggest news of the year.

The Tanzanian case identifies a complex and intertwining between global and local modes of communication during the Gongo la Mboto explosions and identifies a void, which is being filled by other informal channels of communication. They call it pavement radio and the use of social media can be “seen as an extension of already existing Tanzanian or African patterns/cultures” (Ekström, Høg Hansen and Boothby, 2012:167).

In Iran, a group of disconnected digital activists used their ability to obtain textual and visual information to start what became known as the ‘Green Revolution’ using social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. They were called ‘citizen journalists’ and social media use during the crisis gave the protesters the platform to spread information beyond Iran, which was considered to be the birth of citizen Journalism (Sadaf and Shahira, 2013:60)

The Iranian crisis however failed as the government quickly unleashed a widespread crackdown on the revolution and increased restrictions on domestic and foreign news outlets (CNN World 2010). The government also started deleting sites in an attempt to block the flow of information. However, the video of the murder of Neda Agha-Soltan still made its way through to the internet and became the center of the Iranian fight for freedom.

From the Iranian example, we see the potentials of a social media (video) in reaching out to thousands of people for example when the Iranian video went viral, US news networks reported on the incident and the video eventually got the attention of the president of the United States of America, Barack Obama who responded to it:
“Iran must stop all violent and unjust acts on its own people; the Iranian government must know that the world is watching” (Palmer, 2009)

A trend of social media “citizen media” being used for international solidarity and calling for the respect of human rights, promotion of peace and security while condemning acts of bad governance and dictatorship is seen.

The Iranian government failed to completely censor the internet so Iranian citizen journalists still found ways to access the web (Berenger, 2015:306). Social media is therefore considered as a platform for alternative discourse and freedom of expression⁶.

Albeit the obvious positive role played by social media in the cases discussed above, Lievrouw (2011:2) writes that social media have posed complex problems of social inequality and solidarity, privacy and security, political and economic participation, freedom and control, expert versus lay or popular knowledge.

To support the negative claims on social media, Dencik and Leistert (2015:1) add that the relationship between social media and protests highlights some of the most important questions regarding the role of digital media technology in contemporary societies. A lot of research on social media has focused on the positive changes new technologies have brought to society without paying much attention to the complexities, which these same technologies have brought concerning social media and protests.

Also scholars have focused on the coordination and communication challenges that people engaged in collective action face, but Tufekci (2017:25) asks a pertinent question which this study partly seeks to find out: “if authorities control the public sphere, how will activists coordinate? How will they frame their messages in the face of corporate or state media gate keeping and censorship”?

This research also proposes a combination of social media and small media as Rucht (2004: 27) notices; from local to global Poell and Van Dijck (2015:527). Ekström, Høg Hansen and Boothby (2013:164) call this "a citizen media production, social in character but transnational in scope" They term it "Globalization of the pavement".

⁶ “The internet is considered a window through which people in the Middle Eastern nations can breathe fresh air. This air is unpolluted by their government’s monopoly and monarchy because regimes have difficulty controlling it” Berenger (2015:112).
We argue that the presentation of social media as the only alternative platform for creation of citizen news overlooks other small media, which have existed for centuries and are being used every day by subjugated minorities in African countries.

We can best understand the opportunities and challenges presented by the use of social media to Africans from an African perspective because different people in the continent deal with these modern technologies differently depending on their cultures, social and political contexts (Mutsvairo, 2016:5).

How can people participate in using social media if they have no access to it? Moreover, if they are exposed to these ICTs, what guarantees that they accept and use it? Even if people accept and use these new technologies, can we assume that the results are always positive?

e. Social media openness/affordances, participatory theories: A critique.

Research has emphasized on the positive side of social media affordances without emphasizing its limitations. Defining affordances, Tufekci (2017:26) explains it to mean what a given technology facilitates or makes possible or the ability to cheaply and easily connect on a global scale. He continues to explain that these protests rely heavily on online platforms and technological tools for organization and participation but open participation on social media does not always mean equal and smooth participation.

According to Lievrouw (2011:13-14) Interactivity has long been considered as a distinguishing feature of new media and ICTs as it is very important in the process of social change and it supports conditions for participation which is a very important element of alternative activist new media.

He goes further to explain that interaction on social media does not necessarily mean participation even if social media has the power to persuade people. Exposure to or reception of a message may or may not provoke action on the part of the receiver. What conditions then are needed to convert message reception into action?

To answer this question, Heeks (2017:59-60) identifies one of the key roles in ICT4D to be that of intermediaries since they intermediate between an individual and one or more
of the steps of information value chain, he calls them “informediaries” and stresses on their important contribution in ICT4D discourse. In this research, the Cameroonian diaspora and its activists are the intermediaries between online and offline communities. We will later discuss the role of the diaspora in activism in the case of the Anglophone crisis and how they use social media to connect online and offline spaces.

Social media provides a space for open interaction but it is what people do with the content which can produce results. How then do people use it? What further spurs them into action? People must actively do something like share, search, recommend, like and comment. Using social media entails action, which may motivate users towards more involved social and cultural participation online and offline? Lievrouw (2011:14) suggests that it is a shorter cut from use, interaction, to participation than it is from exposure, to reception to participation.

Bucher and Helmond (2017:3) consider the theory of affordances to be a multifaceted one which can be used in studies of what social media allows people to do. According to them affordances can be relational considering what it provides whether good or bad.

Notions of affordance however fail to address the complexity of processes involved in social interactions and technology use Bucher and Helmond (2017:14). The affordance theory can be criticized for undermining the tensions and barriers open information sharing can have offline and it does not mention the fact that the same tools which are used to enable open information sharing can be used to limit information sharing as well (Gibbs, Rozaid and Eisenberg 2013:104-103).

Even though these media function as platforms for alternative discourse, Mattoni, et al (2010:2) explain that they do not operate in a vacuum and acknowledge the presence and contribution of other mass media, interpersonal, traditional media, which in combination with new media create different levels of communications flow, overlap in which top down and bottom up flows intertwine.

Slater (2013:2-6) says we can only conclude on the contribution of ICT on development by looking at an individual user with direct access to a machine and the literacy skills such individual has to use the internet knowledgably. Generalisations and assumptions made about the role of modern technology on development do not consider some specific
cases where everything is not equal, for instance some people do not have access to the internet, some do not have smart phones and some do not know how to use all of the above.

It is considered that states who readily adopt the use of social media in their policies will experience substantial growth (UN report 15 November 2017) but I wonder if this involves the marginalized people of local communities and their everyday realities of no exposure to ICTs and infrastructure? Fusch (2017:8) writes that such questions are necessary in order to understand who benefits or loses from using social media.

III. Research methodology: Findings and analysis of survey.

This study is a qualitative ethnographic research which uses the following methods:

- Online survey questionnaire
- Participant Observation on Facebook
- Unstructured phone interviews

Why Qualitative Ethnographic research and how is it suitable for this study

Ethnographic research method is used for this study because it is a qualitative research of social phenomena like media use, effects and production as part of people's lives and cultures, which gives ideas and values about how they view and share the world.  

As an Anglophone Cameroonian, my background knowledge of the history and politics of Cameroon greatly helps in understanding the cultures and traditions of the region. This research can be considered to be recounted from the perspective of someone who is a part of a culture of the people over extended periods of time and as a follow up research on more recent trends of events leading to the Anglophone crisis.

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7 To understand how social media use during the crisis affected people, we need to know more about the Anglophones, their values and culture. To this we must understand how they communicate. Anders and David (2013:60)

8 My BSc is in Journalism and Mass communication at the University of Buea in the South West Region of the country where the Anglophone crisis is taking place and two years of working experience as a journalist in the country. I am also originally from Anglophone Cameroon.
My participation online, phone interviews and survey questionnaire help me to link literature to empirical findings and make conclusions. Literature from previous scholars on social media in protests is also used to discuss findings.

f. Analysis of Survey Questionnaire

16 questions were asked in an online survey, which was distributed on Facebook with 73 respondents. Questions 1 to 16 are shared at the end of this research.

The questions were both open-ended and closed ended depending on the kind of information I was trying to get and all respondents were Anglophone Cameroonians in and out of the country, male and female between the ages of 18-65.

Out of the 73 people who took part in the survey a majority of 69.86% were located in the Diaspora while just 30.14% were based in Anglophone Cameroon. This was expected because the Diaspora lives in developed countries with more access to the internet and ICT infrastructure while the reverse is true of home based Cameroonians.

Q2 Location

Q6 Did you find it easy to access the internet from your location?
Everyone who participated in the survey was aware of the Anglophone crisis and 26% heard about it on social media, 13.70% through small media and 65.75% through both.

**Q3 Are you aware of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?**

Out of these 73 participants, 20.29% considered themselves active in the struggle while 53.62% said they were passive and 27.54% inactive. This goes to confirm that interacting on social media does not necessarily guarantee participation as earlier discussed in literature review. Social media encourages interactivity but not all interactions end up being participatory for collective goals.

**Q4 How did you find out about the Anglophone crisis?**

**Q5 How would you describe your participation in the crisis**
88.89% found it easy to connect to the internet while 11% did not find it easy, of 73 participants 94.41% think the use of social media contributed in fueling the crisis while 12.33% disagreed. 30.99% thought that the use of social media had a very positive impact on the crisis while 15.49 were neutral, 13.49% thought it was very negative.

It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents think social media use fueled the crisis even though its use could be very positive or negative to an extent. In what was then do social media use enable protests and how can the Cameroonian diaspora use online activism to do the reverse? That is promote peace and resolution. These questions we will discuss more in detail while addressing research questions proper.

81.94% used social media to communicate during the crisis while 26.39% used small media.
Also, note that during the internet ban, all regions in the Anglophone sections had no internet connection hence people in these regions relied on other forms of communication apart from social media. In open-ended questions about their thoughts on the ban, many Anglophone Cameroonians in and out of the region expressed their disappointment on the government and the frustrations they experienced physically, psychologically, economically and socially due to the internet ban.

During the ban 37.14% used social media, 21.43% used small media while 77.14% used both.

The ban on the internet meant the Diaspora had to find other ways to get online messages across to offline platforms and each medium seemed to be used by both ends in the absence of one. For example phone calls from the Diasporas to Cameroon and vice versa still carried information about the crisis back and forth. 15.15% of participants said social media can contribute to development, 15.15% suggested that small media can contribute to development and 75.76% agreed that both social media and small media could contribute to development.
The last three questions were open-ended questions on their thoughts about the internet ban, how the crisis had affected them personally and if they had any suggestions to make regarding how social media could be used effectively to contribute to development. All respondents condemned the internet ban to be a gross violation of human rights and some shared many mixed feelings regarding the potential positive role social media can have on community development and social change if properly used.

Q11 What are your thoughts about the internet ban during the crisis?

A) “It was a gross violation of human rights” (Survey respondent 25th April 2018 9:18 PM).

B) “Counterproductive” (Survey respondent 25th April 2018 9:10 PM)

C) “It was against human rights and the Cameroon government should be accountable for it” (Survey respondent 24th April 2018 9:39)

D) “The ban on the internet may serve as evidence to the claim of gross marginalization that some Anglophones present as the cause of the Anglophone crisis”. (Survey respondent 24th April 2018 2:14 PM)

Q14 How has the Anglophone crisis affected you personally?
A) “Negatively. My people (Anglophones) are suffering back home. We need to be separated from the barbaric Biya regime.” (Survey respondent 5/6/2018 2:51 PM)

B) “As an entrepreneur it has slowed down my business in the English speaking regions. I have had to support friends and family financially who have been directly affected by the crisis. I have also lost a friend and former co-worker in the course of the struggle.” (Survey respondent 5/6/2018 2:06 AM)

C) “My career is in jeopardy as I work with the government. I am in-between the devil n the deep red sea. My children’s education was interrupted for one year, and now schools are not effective. I’m living in perpetual fear for my life as a civil servant.” (Survey respondent 5/5/2018 10:31 PM)

Q16 Do you have any suggestions on how social media could be used for development?

A) “Media is an essential and indispensable tool for development. However, like any tool, its use requires measures to avoid spread of unwanted information that may heighten unpleasant outcomes”. (Survey respondent 4/24/2018 9:39 PM)

B) “Social media should serve as a tool for organizing and taking action”. (Survey respondent 5/6/2018 2:51 PM)

C) “Yes create development oriented programs directed to the grassroots only through the use of community radios which talk directly to the people in the language they best master” (Survey response 5/6/2018 2:10 PM)

From their responses to both open and closed ended questions, it was clear that the first priority of home based was not just access to the internet, they needed an environment of peace, security, basic human rights and poverty alleviation while the Diaspora was more concerned about the crisis and how to use social media to expose the repressive government. In line with theoretical postulations discussed in the literature review
section, access to ICTs is not the first thing developing countries need to close the digital divide gap and enable social change.

g. Unstructured focus group phone interviews

In a bid to balance this study, it was necessary to have unstructured phone interviews with a group of people who were found to be left out in the survey because of their lack of internet connection but who had suffered the most repercussions on the crisis.

These focus groups are the men, women and youths of the Anglophone minorities. I choose the Manyu region\(^9\) as it is the area where the crisis seems to be at its peak, people in these regions have experienced the worst consequences on human life due to the crisis. During analysis it was clear that the study would be one sided if their opinions were not included. Their opinions will give this study some balance.

30 phone calls were made to 10 women, 10 men and 10 youths in the Manyu region and questions asked were in relation to their thoughts about the use of social media during the crisis and the ban on the internet. For confidentiality purposes, I will not share full names due to the sensitive nature of the crisis.

It was found out that this group of people felt uninvolved with the affairs of the online community as majority of them have never used social media and do not have smart phones or internet connection hence they could not participate online about something which greatly concerned them.

\(^9\) Manyu is a division of the South West region of Cameroon. (Extracted from Wikipedia, 6th August 2018)
When asked if she had used Facebook during the crisis, Paulina, an older woman in Mamfe, responded "Oh I do not use Facebook, I don’t even know about it" (Unstructured interview excerpt 20th April 2018).

Another older man, Samuel, responded, "I've never used Facebook, I am very busy with my farm work" (Unstructured interview excerpt 21st April 2018).

"The more noise you make on Facebook the more the police kills us at home" (Constance interview excerpt 28th April 2018).

"Why use Facebook? We have lived in Cameroon with Biya as President for over 35 years without any war, why now?" (Philip Unstructured interview excerpt 20th April 2018).

“The problem started with the young generation using internet to expose the government” (Gerald, Unstructured interview excerpt 25th April 2018).

“I believe dialogue is key” (Thomas, unstructured interview April 20th 2018).

In spite of their lack of connectivity to the online world, there was also a sense of solidarity and understanding of how the Diaspora was using social media to expose the government, which was a common plight they shared. They also expressed their concern on the extent to which the Diaspora was using social media to "stir up” trouble, which also meant continuous torture of offline masses by the military.

“I believe what our brothers and sisters abroad are doing is for our own good, we need them to fight” (Ojong Unstructured interview 22nd April 2018).

“Facebook is a very good place to expose the ills of our government but must be used with caution” (Arrey Unstructured interview 22nd April 2018).

“The fight is taking place here at home, anyone who wants to fight should come back home and join us instead of making noise online” (Besong Unstructured interview 20th April 2018).

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10 Mamfe is the capital of Manyu division (retrieved from Wikipedia 20th August 2018)
“So many people have lost their lives already and the rest of the world needs to know what is happening here, we need dialogue” (Therese Unstructured interview 20th April 2018).

They believed that like every tool, social media should be used "carefully" to find solutions to problems and not "provoke" the government to cause more harm. They considered the use of social media during the crisis to be a platform that promotes political unrest rather than peace.

During these interviews, the youths were discover to be another group of people who were filling the gap of information between the Diaspora and the subjugated non-users of the internet. Though they lived in these subjugated communities, they are kind of in-between users, some travel in and out of their communities from time to time hence they get exposed to social media and ICTs. During these times, they partially participate in the online community's activities and partially use social media for personal and generally benefits.

Derick a youth from Manyu when asked about how he used social media to connect with the diaspora answered:

"We try to keep in touch but most times do not have enough money to buy mobile data when we travel out of the village" (Unstructured interview 25th April 2018).

“Whenever I go to the city I use Facebook to share the pictures and videos in my phone of what is going on in the village.” (Adolph unstructured interview 20th April 2018).

“It is very difficult to keep in touch with anyone outside the village because of no internet connection, sometimes we don’t have mobile data or electricity to charge our phones” (Doris unstructured interview 22nd April 2018).

“Sometimes we receive calls and messages from abroad or from the city informing us about ghost towns, when we receive we tell others who have not heard” (Ashu unstructured interview 23rd April 2018).

These younger generation of villagers who occasionally use the internet create a link between the Diaspora and the older generations who are informed about latest online updates by the youths through word of mouth, phone calls, text messages and sometimes
flyers which are printed and spread by the youths in these communities. Most of these youths face the challenge of poverty due to unemployment, illiteracy and sometimes-inadequate education.

A theme of younger generation of marginalized people rising as the link between the Diaspora and the villagers is picked up here and this link rather seals the relationship between social media and small media for social change and development. Such semi-exposures by the youth’s means that the villagers are being introduced to new ideas, new ICTs and social media use thereby closing the gap of digital divide between the city and the village and the Diaspora and the village one-step at a time.

h. Participant observation on Facebook

Facebook was predominantly used for online activism by sending out messages regarding the direction of the crisis. Social media was used as a medium to keep in touch with one another transnationally (between the Diaspora and home) and vice versa. In my observation, the Diaspora used social media more than home based and were very influential in spreading information, which was vital in projecting the struggle to the rest of the world. But there was a limitation to what the Diaspora and the online community could do to change things offline in subjugated communities, creating an imbalance between offline and online activism.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Q10 Which media did you use predominantly to communicate with friends and family during the crisis?**

Managing these online and offline disparities is what seems to be the biggest challenge of contemporary protests as some activities are only possible online while others are conceived and practical offline, while some can be practiced both online and offline. Activism would not be possible without online means especially in Africa where there is
little access to internet making the online-offline connection a farfetched project. (Mutsvairo, 2016:12-13). How well did the Cameroonian Diaspora manage this disparity? This is contrary to what Poell and Van Djick (2018:2) postulate that a distinction can no longer be made between offline and online spaces since protesters carry smart phones and have continuous access to online and offline platforms which enables them to share their content and observations simultaneously as protests unfolds online and offline.

In most cases, it took several days and weeks for the Diaspora and online activists to devise means of transferring messages from social media to mobile phones through text messages and phone calls to disconnected people and a lot of the action relied on individual will and costs. Sometimes users will share activist’s posts but will not go an extra mile to make phone calls from Diaspora to home. Lane and Sonya Dal Cin (2017:2) explain how online action may inhibit offline action using the term “slacktivism”, which means social media can be said to promote inaction or reluctance from users who believe that by sharing on Facebook or joining groups they have made significant contribution to the struggle. We cannot assume that activists have succeeded to maintain the status of the protest offline just because users on social media have shared posts, commented and liked if they do not make any action later, which influences offline activities.

Below are some Facebook updates by online activists Mark Bareta and Tapang Ivo Tanku. These activists are chosen because they have registered more than 100.000 followers on Facebook due to the Anglophone crisis. Analysis will focus on the period before and after the internet ban from October 2016 to 2017 when they were the only two famous recognized activists. Both activists live in the Diaspora and used Facebook for information sharing, mobilization, organization, strategizing; propaganda and criticism of the government and military.

“And the terrorist military are seriously shooting gun and tear gassing our people. There is commotion and Pandemonium now” (Facebook status update by activist Mark Bareta 20th October 2017)

Thank you all for watching and participating. God Bless You ALL. Turn up massively in every village, street, and town for Jan 2, 2017. (Facebook update by activist Tapang Ivo 31 December 2016)
“Yes, I am back. Facebook banned me for three days…” (Facebook status update by activist Tapang Ivo 28 December 2016)

Activists used Facebook to gather the Diaspora to reach out to home. Social media is used here to promote transnationalism.

“I have seen photos; notes etc of a number of Diaspora groups, individuals reaching out to those wounded bereaved families. Please do not give up. For all those who got the means, continue to support all those wounded and those who lost loved ones in Southern Cameroons. Your support is a boost to their spirit. A number of individuals home are doing the same, let’s all continue reaching out to everyone in hospitals etc.”(Facebook status update by activist Mark Bareta 21 October 2017).

“Contribute in your own way. You can offer to print several banners and share. You can share out printed photos of those molested or killed. No contribution is insignificant” (Facebook Status update by activist Tapang Ivo 22 December 2016).

“Please buy a SMART phone NOW for someone back home. It is a SMART WIN. Jan 2, 2017 is the deal”. (Facebook Status update Tapang 20 December 2016).

One of the most difficult tasks after amassing great crowds is the issue of organization and coordination (Mutsvairo, 2016:12). Activists in the Diaspora used Facebook to strategize and organize the offline communities by giving them instructions on what to do and how to do it. They used live and recorded videos to send out instructions to their followers who then transferred these messages to people who probably did not have access to social media or who did not have smart phones. Live videos were also used for interactive sessions with the people, during which they strategized. Their messages were meant to motivate, encourage and coordinate protest actions, both online and offline. Also to correlate actions especially when online messages from the Diaspora gets offline to Cameroon and triggers reactions which produces results like boycotts, protests, sharing of messages offline, Diaspora calling and texting home, sending money, smart phones and medical aid to friends and families back home.

“A special message to those who understand ONLY Pidgin English: The strategies to boycott Dec 27 and attend Jan 2, 2017, are clear in my special message. Download and share with all OKADA riders, taxi drivers, village dwellers. Take a few minutes to play it
at the OKADA riders' parks and village junctions. They should know what we are fighting for and why we need to speak as ONE”. (Video message caption on a video status update by activist Tapang Ivo 22 December 2016).

“Don't be so quick to give up. Of course, we have been waiting for too long for a dialogue, but we have not been fighting for too long for it either. This is the biggest and most united long-lasting protest ever organized using modern forms of warfare. It started only four months ago, although our grievances started since 1961. (Facebook status update by activist Tapang Ivo 23 December 2016).

“Despite the futile attempts to shut down internet, ghost towns were the most effective since the struggle started. You capture the internet but we capture communications.”(Facebook status update by Tapang Ivo 21 October 2017).

URGENT! Avoid using direct phone lines as much as possible. Use Whatsapp or Facebook calls. The regime is tapping conversations, especially for home calls, citing insider reports online. December 16 2016

“Please do NOT go out for any peaceful protest tomorrow. Stay at home and leave them idle. Boycott ALL schools” (Facebook status update by Tapang Ivo 11 December 2016)

Call someone NOW and tell him/her not to go on the streets. STAY AT HOME. If you are a keen follower of mine, please type on your page 'STAY AT HOME” (Facebook status update by Tapang Ivo 8th december 2016)

Trends of propaganda and division are seen in some activist’s messages. The diverse messages and confusion spread in some posts concerning the ultimate goal of the struggle was one of the weaknesses of the Anglophone crisis. At some point, protesters and activists could not seem to agree on what messages to carry during their protests as different camps wanted different things; this intensified the gaps between collective and individual interests. See literature review.

*If you feel the struggle for FEDERALISM is not a "now-issue," BACK OFF NOW! Give the stage to those know it's a "now-issue." (Status update by Tapang Ivo 20 December 2016).*
“The battleground is online and not offline. Apart from the consortium, every individual(s) meeting for the common goal of this peaceful protest should address their concerns publicly. “To defeat an opponent, PINCH where it hurts most. Social media hurts, boycotts hurt and flag challenge in diaspora hurts”. (Facebook update by Tapang 20 december 2016).

“Please, for those in diaspora, I suggest that your banners could also carry Federalism because if we believe in our WINNING consortium, it is important to have a harmonized message.”(Facebook update by Tapang Ivo, 17 december 2016).

Please call NOW! Congressman Chris Van Hollen of Maryland has the largest Cameroonian diaspora in all of US Congress. Can we please call and speak about Cameroon’s Anglophone problem? (Facebook update by Tapang Ivo 12 December 2016).

Like most contemporary protests, the challenge with the Anglophone crisis has been on how to effectively use social media tools to organize and impact social change and development. The crisis is still ongoing, enthusiasm of the people is reduced regarding social media as a redeeming feature against the regime and the momentum of the protests has diminished. Many people consider some activists to be using the struggle for their personal gains and this has deviated the raison d’etre of the struggle from its original focus which was fighting political oppression and what seems left is the online spectacle between numerous groups meanwhile the brutal reality of the crisis is ravaging the minority offline. Social media’s success in protests remains largely contradictory and there is a lack of sufficient empirical studies investigating social media strategies used by advocacy groups for the purpose of activism in Africa (Mutsvairo, 2016:5).
Discussion of research questions

i. How does social media use affect protests: What role did the Cameroonian Diaspora play in online activism and to what extent were they successful in serving as intermediaries between the online and offline communities?

The Cameroonian diaspora has been very active in the Anglophone crisis and some opinions point to them as the most integral part of online activism in contemporary movements. What role do they play in protests? The best way to access the role of the Diaspora in conflict is to access their role in the various stages of conflict emergence, continuation, escalation, termination and post conflict reconstruction (Paivi and Mahdi, 2009:8). How did the Cameroonian Diaspora hijack the Anglophone crisis? Once the protests broke out, dynamic young Cameroonians at home and abroad became interested in the struggle. The then leader of the Southern Cameroon consortium kept in contact with Cameroonians in the Diaspora by coming online to report/share what had been going on in Anglophone Cameroon. During these exchanges between home and abroad, the Diaspora became more active in the protests and took an extra step to "own it" when the consortium leaders offline were arrested, jailed and internet in the region banned. Interim leaders from the Diaspora used their lobbying and advocacy power to bring the crisis to the international stage.

Survey results revealed that (90%) of Anglophone Cameroonians feel strongly that the use of social media contributed to blow the crisis out of proportion.

Q8 In your opinion, did the use of social media contribute in fueling the crisis?
The Diaspora with social media was able to provoke the intervention of foreign agencies and the international community's awareness. The Diaspora used social media as a platform to expose bad governance and call for government's accountability.

Some Cameroonians blame the outbreak of the crisis on social media use but their impact cannot be all negative. Paivi and Mahdi (2009:7) identify several action spheres were the Diasporas might exert positive influences on socio-economic and political aspects but their actual impact on conflicts remains unclear as sometimes their contributions, which were intended for good, could have the opposite effect.

I think the diaspora used the power of freedom of expression on social media to champion the plight of Anglophone Cameroonians even though freedom of expression led to the rise of several spokes persons who imposed themselves as “leaders” and led to a conflict ridden struggle between those who found themselves running things and other people in the movement who could also express themselves online (Tufekci, 2017:23-24). This in my observation was the biggest problem of the struggle and the Diaspora was unable to organize and coordinate protests to synchronize online and offline activities because everyone could freely use social media to do and say what they liked and they still managed to distract and amass their own set of followers. The tensions created online by various groups with different leaders and slogans did more to scatter than unite the struggle. I agree with Mutsvairo (2016:6) when he says reaching a broader audience is not always a guarantee of democratic success and with Paivi and Mahdi (2009:5) when they say that the diaspora can be agents of promoting peace and development as well as peace breakers depending on the nature of the conflict being addressed.

In addition, the use of social media led to the spread of propaganda and rumor, which contributed in weakening the legitimacy of the Anglophone crisis. How can social media use be beneficial to users in times of protests if the protesters are not properly organized? The diaspora and it's activists could very well have good intentions for the struggle but they cannot force people individually to carry out a particular action. Is modern technology to blame or are the users of it responsible for how they use it? The answer is obviously the intention of each user. With this in mind, I agree with Tufekci (2017:23-24) when he writes that these technologies deepen the existing tensions between the
collective will and individual expression and between expressive moments of rebellion and longer term strategies.

How does social media use affect protests? What activities does the diaspora carry out online, what strategies do they use and how do their online activities affect the offline and the entire outlook of the protest? By attempting to answering these questions we hope to understand more how the Cameroonian diasporas has contributed positively or negatively to the Anglophone crisis using social media and small media, to what extent they have met their goals, what plans they have for the future and how all this has contributed to development and social change.

Evidence from the survey, interviews and participant observation conducted during this research revealed that social media use gave the Cameroonian Diaspora the platform to challenge the authoritarian regime of the country and closed the gap of information flow during the internet ban.

The Cameroonian Diasporas served as a link between home and abroad through strong ties, which gave rise to the transnationalisation of the crisis. Heeks (2017:59-60) refers to them as intermediaries and calls them "informediaries" since they intermediate between an individual and one or more of the steps of the information value chain. He recognizes their important role in ICT4D while Lievrow (2011:4) uses the word "mediation" to explain the use of technological channels to extend or enhance communication or interpersonal process, which can be for personal or collective interests.

The Diasporas used social media (Facebook and Twitter) to gather Southern Cameroonians in and out of the country to fight for a common goal. The ability to use these tools to rapidly gather large numbers of protesters with a common goal is the biggest strength of social movements as these movements rely heavily on online platforms and modern ICTs for organization and publicity. Heeks (2017:325) calls it the "power of the crowd" To explain how online connectivity allows large numbers of people to be brought to bear on a development process or problem in a way that would not previously have been feasible.

Once the Anglophone crisis was established online, activists made it a point of duty to come live on Facebook to talk with the people, motivate them and discuss how the
struggle was going to proceed. They used the characteristics afforded by social media, which are open and afford the opportunity for participation, freedom of speech and informal leadership roles even though the protest started suffering setbacks once this large group was formed without proper organization. Chaos became the order of the day, the struggle started going off track when offline leaders were arrested, jailed, and since these movements rely so much on the digital tools, what happens when these tools are banned? The online movement was greatly affected when internet was banned offline in the affected Anglophone regions and this greatly limited the online interaction and participation of Anglophone Cameroonians in the South West region of Cameroon. As earlier discussed, the same tools afforded by social media to enable protests can be used in attempts to disable it. Interviews with some Anglophone Cameroonians revealed a disappointment by the offline minority who believed the Diaspora had hijacked the struggle for their own personal gains. Even though changing landscape of social media use have created opportunities for expression and interaction especially among activists, these same affordances of social media can pose serious problems of security, privacy, political and economic participation, social equity and participation, freedom and control and expert versus lay/popular knowledge (Lievrouw, 2011:4)

The Diaspora activists coordinated online events by keeping in touch with home, writing Facebook posts about the struggle, informing fellow Diasporas, organizing fund raisers, encouraging online communities to share messages, donate money to help victims and call home in places where there was no internet access so that more people offline could be aware of the protests movements.

Social media use during the crisis accelerated activists communication and greatly sped up their ability to share massively using tactics like hashtags to promote certain posts, pages or information online which have also been spread offline on the streets through text messages, flyers and word of mouth. These activities are still being monitored and undermined by authorities and has resulted in banning of internet, blocking of activists Facebook pages, removal of content, even physical arrests. Spread of propaganda and conflicts between the various spokesmen or self-appointed activists/leaders of the struggle with the government has greatly affected the Anglophone crisis and led to its decline.
Evidence from the survey carried out show that a majority of the online participants live in the Diaspora (69.86%), and the Diaspora includes all leaders, activists, spokesperson and active participants in the online and offline protests abroad.

I choose to focus on activism between October 2016 and April 2017 just before and after the internet ban when there were just two main activists; Tapang Ivo and Mark Bareta. They played a great role in initiating the online war remain active in the diaspora.

During my observation on Facebook, I closely followed these activists on their personal pages where they carried out activism about the crisis. Their online activism shaped the struggle with the support of the rest of the diaspora community which was actively involved in writing, sharing and calling on the international community to take note of the Anglophone crisis and do something about it.

The Cameroonian Diaspora was also influential in encouraging an environment of solidarity, which was demonstrated both on Facebook and Twitter through the operation call and text at least 20 people every day to inform them about ghost towns and the famous hashtag #BringBackOurInternet on Twitter. The joint solidarity expressed by the Diaspora was very influential in alerting the international community about the crisis and this contributed in forcing the government to reinstate internet connection in the region after 3 months of black out and also led to the release of several jailed leaders offline.

However, some think the crisis has had negative repercussions (15.49%) while others think its consequences have been positive (30.99%) and some even blame the crisis on social media use. Social media should be seen as tools that enable a culture of sharing but what people do with it depends on them.
ii. How do social media and small media use complement each other in maintaining the crisis status quo and filling information gaps?

“Small media” served as a link between the Diaspora and the Anglophone community and presented an alternative channel for interpersonal communication. The ban on the internet led to the use of mobile phone calls, SMS, word of mouth, flyers, town criers and local group meetings. People resorted to using these forms of interpersonal communication modes to stay in touch with family and relatives at home and abroad especially during the peak of the ban when there was still a lot of confusion in the air regarding the welfare of families and friends.

Small media were used to close the gap of lack of information from mainstream media and social media during the internet ban. Apart from serving as a means of reassuring the masses in times of panic, it readily presented a platform to continue the momentum of the crisis from the Diaspora to home and vice versa. Bulk text messages and calls were sent from the Diaspora to home instructing the local people on the ground on the next plan of action while home sent text messages and calls to inform Diaspora on recent happenings at home.

The survey revealed that 77% of people used both social media and small media during the crisis.

Q12 How did you communicate about the crisis during the internet ban?

45.59% considered both to be reliable, more than 70% considered both social and small media to have possibilities to impact development. More than 60% found out about the crisis from both social and small media and about 80% used both social media and small media to communicate during the ban. Therefore, we can agree that social media is not
replacing small media but both media are used to fill information gaps in the absence of one or the other.

Q13 Which media did you find more reliable during the crisis?

The combined use of small and social media played a very important role in presenting a platform for information exchange and collaboration between home and the Diaspora especially during the internet ban. Nevertheless, such success is only to an extent as many personal financial costs are incurred in calling and texting mobile phones internationally. The most important aspect of the internet ban was the presentation of small media as an alternative platform for interaction and participation. In the case of the Anglophone crisis, the continuation of the protests in spite of the internet blackout was a big step in fighting government intimidation through media censorship. Lack of internet access in the region did not stop the protests as information continued to spread through text messages, word of mouth and flyers. Therefore, we see small media combining with social media to fill information gaps.

Studying the relationship between online and offline activism show that mobilization greatly relies on pre-existing social ties and social media’s success seems limited to online mobilization but fails in coordinating wider publics. Some villages in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon have no internet connection but those regions happen to experience the heat of the crisis most. How then do the activists in the diaspora coordinate those people? According to a survey among protesters on Cairo’s Tahrir Square, nearly half of those interviewed reported said that they heard about the Tahrir Square demonstration through face-to-face communication (Dencik and Leistert, 2015:26).
A combination of old and new media to ensure community development and media adapted to the needs of the people is necessary because people relied on one another during the crisis for the way forward.

Using social media to define alternative media in Africa is limiting as it does not sufficiently include other processes of communication and a focus on social media alone has the tendency to overlook other small-scale media which are used effectively by the marginalized of some communities (Mukhongo, 2016:27).

Combining social media and small media in development projects will guarantee both bottom up and top down communication for development, and enable participation both online and offline. What needs to be done is for development workers to find ways to adapt small media in community development projects and find more ways of strengthening both community media and the people who use them.

iii. What are the long term goals of the Diaspora and the government regarding the Anglophone crisis and the use of social media for change? What is the way forward for ICT4D in Cameroon?

The important role of the Diasporas in conflict resolution through direct political involvement and promotion of peace cannot be undermined. The Cameroonian Diaspora has been influential in advocating change, but their future goals to restore peace online and offline seems unclear. The same online methods used during protests to promote anti-regime messages could be used to promote peace, even though it is unclear how this can be achieved as sometimes their contributions might be intended for peace but in practice have the opposite effect (Paivi and Mahdi, 2009:8).

This is a possible area for further research, on how the Cameroonian Diasporas can effectively use social media to promote peace and after conflict resolutions. Recent observation has not revealed activists in the Diasporas’ strategies to use social media to promote peace or even find ways to end the conflict. They still seem quite adamant to have a dialogue with the President and re-instate the independence of Southern Cameroon, possible reason why the crisis is still ongoing and recording more casualties’ offline every day. People have become weary due to the negative economic, social and
political consequences the crisis has had on development. Schools and businesses have been closed, unemployment rates have increased, juvenile delinquencies are on the rise and many deaths registered. A recent Facebook status update from activist Mark Bareta is trying to motivate the disorganized groups of the struggle to reunite and collaborate to see the struggle through to an expected end which is the achievement of their goals to free the Anglophone regions of Cameroon even if they have to die in the process. Some comments under activists’ posts, which suggested that the diaspora was encouraging people on “ground zero” (offline) to risk their lives, were deleted. People think the diaspora perpetuate violence back home meanwhile they are very safe in the respective countries abroad.

“The leaders of the interim government and nationalist movements must keep talking behind the scenes, disagree to agree and must do so with all integrity and respect for each other. They must do so because they are condemned to collaborate and they must collaborate and unite for Southern Cameroonians. Enough of that fear mongering...If restoration forces on ground zero face the enemy without fear and some die in the process, what more of leaders in the diaspora just meeting to talk and collaborate for the last push?, We will not spare anyone, the bullying mentality will not happen, talk talk talk, this is what ground zero needs” (Facebook status update by activist Mark Bareta 8th August 2018)

The most significant positive contribution of the Diasporas is the remittances sent home to relatives as they play a powerful role in post conflict development (Paivi and Mahdi, 2009:23). The distance between the Diasporas and their homeland has been shortened as modern technology has made it easier to keep in touch and this frequent connection can indirectly expose home to social change and development.

The power of social media in crisis is further demonstrated by the diaspora’s advocacy and lobbying powers, which brought Cameroon to international agenda even though Internet connectivity and availability of ICTs and related infrastructure are still largely underdeveloped in Cameroon.

According to survey results, 30% of home based Cameroonians who responded to the survey had 10% difficulty accessing the internet. Lack of adequate ICT and internet infrastructure is the reason why most Cameroonians at home use their mobile phones to
buy internet data when they can afford it. The reverse is true for Diasporas who have access to both as they live in developed countries.

A recent world UN report urges all countries especially "the world's poorer countries" to invest in their ICT infrastructure as revolutionary advances in technology have the potential to “fundamentally transform” billions of lives even though Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union admits the fear that many of these poorer countries could be left out. (UN news center November 15 2017. The Cameroon government needs to create better internet infrastructure and make it available to its citizens as a way of responding to the use ICTs for development. Government also needs to have open dialogue with its people as a way of resolving the crisis.

In response to the demands for change by Anglophone Cameroonians, the president of the country bought laptops from China as a way of promoting education and technological advancements in the country. The laptops were meant to be given to University students to carry out research but these laptops ended in news stories and were not beneficial to any university students as they complained that these laptops were too small with just 32 gigabytes and they were quite slow to be sold to them by the government at 300.000FCFA. (BBC News pidgin 29 December 2017). How does selling a laptop to poor students without internet access facilitate research and development in the country?

In reaction to calls for dialogue, the president created a commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism in Cameroon to address issues of language and cultural differences in the country, an act that completely undermines the plight of the Anglophone minority who are calling for equality, democracy and freedom of expression. (Agence de presse Africaine January 24 2017)

Furthermore, the involvement of organizations aimed at watching online content, protecting people’s rights to freedom and guiding activists is necessary because what social media does is to monitor conflicts rather than facilitate solutions and this exacerbates tensions especially in transnational contexts (Wasserman, 2018:216).

The military should never be given the power to shoot and kill unarmed civilians during peaceful protests and more international peace keeping and humanitarian organizations
need to monitor online and offline activities in authoritarian governments and intervene during such crisis when necessary.

IV. **Limitations of study**

It was a bit challenging carrying out this study because sometimes I felt like I did not have the best picture of people's real feelings as vividly as could be the case if I were offline. However, being offline in the field would have still needed my online participation and the instability of internet connections in Anglophone Cameroon would have been a bottleneck. Therefore, the study could still be carried out without going to Anglophone Cameroon physically.

It was challenging to be certain if the respondents to questionnaires were answering the questions as honestly as possible and it was also difficult to know if the questions were answered by the person who claims to have responded. Conclusions are based on all empirical findings from all methods used in combination with my objective opinion and theoretical knowledge.

What was most advantageous was the fact that I come from the region where the crisis is going on and a lot of family and friends are experiencing the crisis first hand. It was easier to ask questions on a daily basis during normal phone calls and discussions, even though it was a bit expensive calling more than I would normally do when I needed to talk to 30 different people at different times.

Difficulties to organize an interview with some activists was another limitation even though that did not affect the research, the opinion of the activists can be seen from an analyses of their Facebook posts and this study was more about online and offline interactions. Their unavailability goes further to confirm the superficial participation that can exist on social media as several inbox messages were sent requesting for an appointment for a short interview with no reply.

Lastly, even though majorities of people were familiar with me, some respondents were very skeptical regarding the motive of the survey. Most of them asked if I was working for the government and if their participation in the survey could implicate them in any way. Their skepticism raised doubts as to the authenticity of their participation in the
crisis online and on the survey. Being a member of their community and the familiarity in our relationships solved the problem of doubts and cancelled any skeptics when I explained that the survey was strictly for academic purposes and they could choose to use nicknames or answer the surveys anonymously.

V. **Conclusions**

Summarily, this study has discussed the positive and negative role of social media use in protests; the important role of the Diasporas and their contribution as intermediaries between the online and offline communities. It also highlighted the shortcomings of social media use in crisis in terms of deepening the gap of digital divide, problems of leadership and coordination and debunking the general myths surrounding social media use in protests. Social media contributes in maintaining crisis status quo by promoting a technology-centered illusion of citizen empowerment (Dencik and Leistert, 2015:10), they also provide relative ease of communication, accessibility, speed, reach, especially through mobile phones which enables activists to mobilize, spread information cheaply to global audiences and produce alternative discourse (Wasserman, 2018:220). However, given the inequalities in access to digital media in Africa as discussed earlier, the potential for social media platforms to enhance protests is higher among affluent middle class publics than among the poor (Wasserman, 2018:216). Reason why protests might seem to “succeed online but fail to make remarkable change offline.

This study is beneficial to the field of communication for development because it suggests a combination of social and small media as alternative platforms in development projects for social change in Africa and Cameroon in particular. Findings show that people relied on both during the crisis. It also highlights the important contribution of the youths in local communities as “in-between” users of ICTs and small media hence they play a role in mediating between the local villagers, city dwellers and the diasporas. They enable communication for development by introducing new technologies to villagers who do not have direct access to ICTs.

The role of the Diasporas and online activism is incomplete if no one goes out there to the streets and disconnected areas to make sure that the message gets across and necessary
action takes place. I think it will be beneficial to the Communication for development field if more research is carried out to study the role played by African youths in disconnected communities in fostering development as intermediaries between the local, national and international.

The conclusion of this study could be summarized in one sentence: “online activism without offline action is not enough for a winning struggle”. I think that development and social change projects in Africa need to gradually include more of the disconnected offline communities by meeting them in whatever stage of development they are in and by gradually solving their immediate problems before dragging them into bigger technological scenes. The same theories used in studying social media in protests in developed countries cannot be entirely applied in studies in developing countries.

Despite the contradictory discourses about the role played by social media in protests, we cannot ignore the evidence that point to its contribution as a powerful tool in information sharing and mobilization.

The survey result showed that a majority of users (above 30%) considered the role of social media on development to be very positive as opposed to about 15% who considered its use to be very negative, in the middle of these figures rests a neutral population who were neither for nor against it. I think that social media will always remain what it is; “a great communication tool” and however users choose to use it to serve their interests will depend on them. Both social media and small media can exist side by side and serve their respective purposes.

Q4 How did you find out about the Anglophone crisis?
More research needs to be carried out in the future on local modes of communication in Cameroon and how they can be used for community development projects as Unwin (2017:5) sees the need for governments, the private sector and civil society to work collaboratively together to impact effective development projects.

Social media will continue to spread across the world whether small media are used alongside or not.

A way forward is to identify more small modes of communication, which are still being used in some African communities and find ways of supporting and adapting them with the new. In Anglophone Cameroon, people relied on one another and all the small modes of communication and media used to transfer messages among their communities. All these forms of communication could be harnessed to form regular patterns of information production and flow for development purposes.

The government needs to invest in community-based projects in order to integrate local communities with national and international. People in local communities need to be supported in developing their own local initiatives in Cameroon especially ways of curbing poverty. We cannot address the digital divide or make conclusions on it based on this study alone because the major concerns raised by the people in these communities are general well being, peace and security. Youths are still missing school while a majority of the population still live in poverty. Local people need to be educated on how they can use what they have to develop themselves to become more financially independent. Farmers could learn how to use fertilizers to achieve more harvests, which can sell locally to generate some income while scholarships could be given to deserving children in families to go back to school.

While the mainstream media in Cameroon conspicuously ignores covering news concerning the Anglophone crisis (especially government owned CRTV\textsuperscript{11}); the President of the country has referred to the Diasporas online activism as “Extremists from the younger generation” who are trying to separate the country and taint its peace. This

\textsuperscript{11}CRTV (Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation) is a major radio and television broadcasting company in Cameroon, which is owned and controlled by the government. (Wikipedia, assessed 8\textsuperscript{th} August 2018)
reiterates the strict censorship measures and dictatorship typical of authoritarian regimes in Africa.

Diasporas needs to find more ways to interact with local communities and propose initiatives, which can positively affect community growth offline because the compromised pro-government coverage of protests by mainstream media means that these protests are usually criticized and considered a threat to the government and public safety, which can affect their credibility negatively (Wasserman, 2018:217).

If the same solidarity, which is expressed during crisis, were maintained when there is no crisis, maybe change could happen without protests, if social media were used to facilitate solutions rather than monitor and promote protests then maybe we would see limited tensions especially in transnational contexts. If the Diaspora communicates with home about socio-economic, political and educative issues when there is no crisis as much as they do during the crisis, then the fate of people in local communities will not be left in the hands of an unconcerned government, as change cannot happen in one day. It takes time and intensifying activism online because we want change now, without minding the offline consequences can be counterproductive.

The Anglophone crisis is still ongoing...
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**Links**

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https://edwardsnowden.com/


https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-42509984


https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/cen

Survey Questions

1) Name or nickname

2) Location (Diaspora or Cameroon)

3) Are you aware of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon? (Yes or No)

4) How did you find out about the crisis? (Social media (an explanation is provided regarding the meaning of social media to be technologically enabled media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, small media (an explanation is provided to explain small media to be all forms of community and interpersonal modes of communication which are not technologically enabled or internet based, last option is both.)

5) How would you describe your participation in the crisis? (Active, passive, inactive)

6) Did you find it easy to access internet from your location? (Yes or No)

7) What did you use to connect to the internet? (Smart phones, computers/laptops or both)

8) In your opinion, did the use of social media contribute in fueling the crisis? (Yes or No)

9) What impact did the use of social media have on development? (Very positive, positive, neutral, very negative, or negative)

10) Which media did you use predominantly to communicate with family and friends during the crisis? (Social media, small media)
| 11) What are your thoughts about the internet ban during the crisis? (Open ended question) |
| 12) How did you communicate about the crisis during the internet ban? (Social media, small media or both) |
| 13) Which media did you fine more reliable during the crisis? (Social media, small media, both) |
| 14) How has the Anglophone crisis affected you personally? (Open ended question) |
| 15) Which media do you think can contribute to community development? (Social media, small media, both) |
| 16) Do you have any suggestions on how social media could be used for development? (Open ended question) |