

Advancing Gender Equality in Cameroon: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Role of Law and Policy

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Abstract

Gender equality remains a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development, social justice, and inclusive governance. Despite notable progress in legal and policy reforms, women in Cameroon continue to face significant barriers to equal participation in political, economic, educational, and social life. These barriers are reinforced by entrenched socio-cultural norms, limited access to economic resources, gender-based violence, and gaps in the implementation of existing legal frameworks. This paper examines the current state of women's rights and gender equality in Cameroon through a multidisciplinary approach that integrates legal analysis with gender studies perspectives. It evaluates the effectiveness of national legislation and international human rights obligations in addressing gender inequalities while highlighting the persistent disconnect between normative commitments and lived realities. The study further explores the role of education, economic empowerment, community engagement, and institutional accountability in advancing women's rights and promoting inclusive development. Drawing on existing literature, policy documents, and contemporary developments, the paper identifies practical strategies for strengthening gender-responsive governance and fostering greater participation of women in decision-making processes. It argues that sustainable progress requires not only comprehensive legal reforms but also transformative social change that challenges discriminatory norms and promotes equal opportunities for all genders. By situating the discussion within the Cameroonian context, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on gender justice and offers policy recommendations aimed at enhancing women's empowerment and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality. The findings are intended to inform scholars, policymakers, civil society organizations, and development practitioners working to advance gender-inclusive policies and practices in Cameroon.

Keywords: Women and Gender Studies; Gender Equality; Women's Empowerment; Cameroon; Gender-Based Violence; Women's Rights; Legal Reform; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Gender Policy; Inclusive Governance