



ADISI - CAMEROUN

CFI

DÉVELOPPEMENT  
MÉDIAS

# REPORT OF THE SOUTHWEST REGIONAL MEETING



October 20,  
2023 at Limbe

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The one-day workshop organized by ADISI Cameroon, is part of the Talk Peace project implemented in Cameroon until 2024 by CFI, French Agency for Media Development. The seminar served as a platform to listen to the plights of journalists practicing in the Southwest region of Cameroon, especially with regards to the access to information in the war hit region. The workshop was also an opportunity to drill journalists and Civil Society Organizations on the role of regional and local authorities in the fight against disinformation in the region as well as propose ways through which journalists and CSOs can partner with local administrations in the fight against disinformation in the Southwest region.

Note that disinformation is one of the major fuelers of hate speech and violence across the country, and is oftentimes relayed both on and offline through various social media platforms as well as traditional media notably; radio, TV and newspapers. Some journalists rely most content in good faith without verification or checking on the credibility of their news sources, making them liable to be vectors of propaganda, rumors, and mis/dis/malinformation.

For this reason, the regional consultation meeting served as an opportunity for staff of the Christian Broadcasting Service (CBS) radio Buea, some Southwest based journalists, CSOs and local administrators of the region, to discuss how to access authentic sources of information within the region, and the perspective of each stakeholder in the process of pacification and stabilization, given that journalists through their daily practice of news processing can promote the dynamic appeasement.

It should be noted that the situation in the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon baptized the anglophone crisis which has been escalating for over 6 years now, makes it difficult for journalists on the ground to practice, as well as risk their sources of information.

In line with the fight against the circulation of false information in the society and the need to reduce the risks they pose to stability and social cohesion, the one-day workshop this equipped journalists with necessary knowledge on how to access information sources in the region.

## II. CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

The media has a significant and undisputed role in the dissemination of information and a tool in the promotion of national unity and social cohesion in contemporary society. Both the traditional media (radio, TV, newspaper) and the social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter etc.), serve as a forum for dialogue, peaceful and pluralistic exchange as well as constructive debates which contribute to strengthening national cohesion.

With the initiation of the press freedom law in Cameroon in the 1990s, the government no longer has monopoly on the media as before. In spite of this, statistics suggest that with the over 600 print media outlets, nearly 200 radio stations, and about 30 TV stations, the media is yet to ensure an enabling environment favorable for the production of pluralistic, reliable and peaceful programs. The Cameroonian media also suffers threats and kidnappings, brutalization by armed forces, digital insecurity, equipment seizure and apprehension of information sources. These limitations have thus increased the vulnerability of journalists in the crisis hit Southwest region. This sometimes results in the relay of unverified content from dubious sources on the social media by journalists, which ends up polluting public debates, retards social cohesion and stirs tensions between the public.

As part of the fight against the circulation of fake news and hate speech and the need to promote social cohesion, it is thus vital to raise awareness, build skills of young influencers on the internet, and engage the youths in movements and associations advocating dialogue and national reconciliation, in order to limit vectors of false information and hate speech both on and offline.

## III. OBJECTIVES

### *1- Overall objective*

A meeting between CBS Radio and various stakeholders in the southwest region to define the prospects for collaboration in the peace program produced by the media.

### *2. Specific objectives*

- Discuss the issue of disinformation in the region in relation to the Anglophone crisis.

- Enrich the network of local information sources.
- Prepare content for interactive peace programming.

## IV. Results

- Media, CSOs, local institutions met to identify the most relevant topics and approaches to issues of disinformation, peace and social cohesion.
- New sources of information are identified at regional level;
- The situation of disinformation is clearly identified and possible solutions to combat it in synergy are being developed;

## V. Methodology

To bring this regional meeting to a successful conclusion, the day saw two main highlights:

1- Morning: This session was graced by the first and second presentations notably; the difficulties of journalists in accessing information sources in crisis/sensitivity and the difficulties of journalists working in crisis/sensitivity respectively. Both sessions were engaging and interactive as all stakeholders from the media, CSOs and local administration shared their experiences and the situation of disinformation in the region relating to the crisis.

2- Afternoon: This other part of the day was marked by the 3rd presentation on the role of the local government in the fight against disinformation and the preservation of peace in the Southwest region. The session also adopted some recommendations and propose solutions to combat disinformation in the region.

## VI. Profile of participants

The 23 participants in this meeting are selected from the following stakeholder families:

- Media
- Civil society organization working on peace, humanitarian and human rights issues in the region
- Local public administrations, especially municipalities, those involved in peace issues are very well placed to encourage dialogue between different groups and help resolve conflict.

**\* Date and place**

The one-day meeting, on Oct 20, 2023, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fini Hotel in the Limbe Southwest region.

\*

### **Modalities**

Participants from the Southwest region were fully supported with

- Breakfast, lunch and dinner during the stay
- 1 night
- Perdiem for those invited as experts.

## **VII. ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKSHOP**

The 23 participants at the workshop, composed of journalists, CSOs and local administrators from the Southwest region, were entitled to two sessions, notably a morning and afternoon session.

The morning session saw the arrival and installation of participants, the rundown of the day's agenda and a welcome note by the Executive Secretary of ADISI- Cameroon Kamtchang Paul Joel, during which he noted the objectives of the seminar and expected results from the session. He also stressed on the need to support and assist CBS radio Buea in the production of peace promotion programs, and the need for the media to unite in the fight against disinformation in the Southwest region. He added that the workshop will serve as a platform to listen to the challenges of journalist working and assessing information in the Southwest region, as well as provide possible solutions to the challenges in question.

Ground rules were adopted, presentation of stakeholders and expectations of participants registered, after which followed the first presentation on constraints and difficulties in assessing information sources in times of crisis. This opening module began at 9:20 a.m. with insights on the role of journalists in crisis and sensitivity. The presentation laid emphasis on journalists as sources of information, a channel for interactive programs, reference and watch dog of the society. It equally stressed on types of information sources notably primary source, secondary and tertiary sources of information, and then an indept analysis on the difficulties journalists face in accessing information sources in the region. These challenges include the politicization of information by potential sources, the use of available sources in the absence of primary sources, a phobia for microphone, limited access to affected areas, security challenges, the absence of an information act to protect journalists, as well as censorship and government control. The question of who is a

journalist was also raised during this presentation and participants could not hold back their views, critics and recommendations on the subject matter. Participants then went on a coffee break during which they took a family photo while waiting for the next module.

The second presentation started at 11:10 a.m. and focused on the difficulties and perspectives of journalists working in crisis. It was indeed a well-researched piece backed by statistics, and an interactive one hour and thirty minutes exchange, which spotlighted the importance of press coverage in crisis and the effects of the ongoing crisis on the media. Amongst the effects are threats on media houses, physical danger, arrest of media personalities, and some media houses sealed, closed or folded up completely. This record is evidence from research carried out by the presenter, with recommendations for journalists such as a security plan, digital safety amongst others. Delegates also engaged in an interactive session on perspectives and way forward, during which they resolved to be conscious of their security first, create their stories and get busy so as not to be bought over by their clients, take time off to fight trauma and rename the crisis. At the end the session was termed satisfactory by all participants.

The afternoon session opened at 12:30 p.m. and featured the third presentation of the day titled the role of local administration in the fight against disinformation and the preservation of Peace in the Southwest region. The session stressed on what disinformation is and how the diaspora has contributed in fueling the crisis in the restive regions. Amongst the highlights of how the local government has addressed disinformation in the region, the presenter noted that the Southwest regional government has constantly followed up the media while encouraging them not to post unverified information. The government also sends out releases addressing cases of disinformation and urging the public to debunk rumors. The local government has also engaged the public in the fight against disinformation in the region, by calling on them to report cases of aggression and violence that can alter the peace of the community. At the end of this solemn part, participants were much convinced about the contributions of the Southwest Regional government and were schooled on how they can unite with their local governments in the fight against disinformation and the preservation of peace in the southwest region.

## VIII. PROGRESS OF WORK

### *Presentation 1: Constraints and difficulties in assessing information sources in times of crisis/sensitivity*

By Boris-Kaloff Batata, station manager CBS radio Buea



**Presentation of Boris-Kaloff Batata, station manager CBS radio Buea**

This was the first presentation delivered at the one-day workshop. The module stressed on the challenges faced by journalists in assessing information sources in the Southwest region. According to the presenter Boris Kaloff Batata, these challenges range from; limited press freedom, safety concerns, restricted access to conflict zones, fear of retaliation and lack of transparency, lack of primary sources, a phobia for microphone, limited access to affected areas, security challenges, the absence of an information act to protect journalists, as well as censorship and government control. To address or curb these challenges, the media presenter believes that the government should create laws and policies that promote press freedom, while CSOs can intensify their peace building advocacy. Community leaders and religious authorities on their part should promote social cohesion and preach tolerance respectively, while media practitioners should engage in promoting dialogue, peace awareness, and a more inclusive participation in societal



issues. Journalists were thus urged to draw closer to the right sources of information, network and build a strong collection which can materialize into a credible source of information.

***Presentation 2: Difficulties of journalists to work in a sensitive/crisis context. Challenges and perspective***

By Nestor Njodzefe, Media Researcher



**Nestor Njodzefe, Media Researcher**

The speaker resumed his presentation by underlining the importance of journalists especially in crisis areas. They range from raising awareness on what's happening, verifying and presenting information, to assisting in providing evidence-based facts when need arises. Going by in-depth research he carried out, statistics suggest the crisis has cost the media a lot in the Northwest and Southwest regions, notably the burning down of some media houses, the folding up of some, and the shutdown of others for diverse reasons. Aside from these he recounted the list of journalists abducted, murdered or detained with regards to the anglophone crisis, and did not forget to stress on how mis/dis/mal/myth information have dried up news sources. He however recommends that journalists should be part of the solution by renaming the crisis while ensuring their digital security and safety as practiced in the Northwest region.



**Ice break session**

*Presentation 3: the contribution of local government in fight against disinformation and the preservation of peace*

By Muma Bih Achu Rosette, Regional Delegate of Communication SW region



**presentation by Muma Bih Achu Rosette, regional communications delegate for the South-West region**

This presentation took place during the afternoon session and stressed on the contributions of the Southwest regional administration in the fight against disinformation and the preservation of peace in the region. The SW regional delegate of communication started by briefly defining key terms and bringing out forms of mis/dis information, before elaborating on the contributions of local government in fighting disinformation. She cited the peace and development initiative in the region through which the government urges stakeholders to come on board and unite with local authorities to fight disinformation and preserve peace in the region. She also stressed on the government playing the role of a watchdog by checking and doing follow-ups on the activities of the media, while encouraging them not to publish without investigations. She noted that the government also issues communiques addressing cases of disinformation while urging the public to report violence and stand against aggressive journalism in the region.

## IX. CONCLUSION

The one-day seminar which took place at Fini hotel in Limbe Southwest region, focused on combating disinformation in the southwest region. The organizers include ADISI Cameroon and Media and Democracy, with the support of the CFI as part of their "Talk Peace" project. The session had in attendance some 23 carefully selected journalists, CSOs and local administrators from the Southwest region, to join a synergy of actions in the fight against disinformation in the southwest region

The workshop was quite interactive and engaging from its morning session during the first and second presentations on plights of journalists in assessing information sources and working in the crisis hit Southwest region, to its afternoon session on the role of local government in the fight against disinformation and the preservation of Peace in the southwest region. Both the facilitators and participants were indeed seasoned experts with a vast wealth of knowledge on the different topics that were discussed, as they popped up from time to time with questions, contributions and or clarifications.

The three presentations were followed by a feedback session through which organizers engaged participants in a question-and-answer session to evaluate the level of understanding on the day's sessions. After getting a positive remark, the Executive Secretary of ADISI Cameroon congratulated participants for the diligence and engagements during the workshop, and lauded all contributions and suggestions raised during the event.

Participants on their part saluted the efforts of the organizers in ensuring a successful workshop even though the one day seemed not enough to address all worries and concerns that were raised by participants. This can only indicate that there's still a lot to be taught and done regarding the fight to eradicate disinformation in the southwest region.

## X. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ A couple of interesting experiences were shared during the workshop and a series of recommendations were identified and adopted they include;
- ❖ Journalists should draw closer to the right sources of information, network and build a strong connection which can materialize into a credible source of information when need arises;
- ❖ Journalists create their news stories and get busy in order not to be bought over by their clients;
- ❖ Journalists and CSO work in synergy with their local administrators in obtaining authentic information as a way to combat disinformation in the Northwest region;
- ❖ Journalists should learn to protect their sources unless it becomes a court case;
- ❖ They should become soldiers of information;
- ❖ Be neutral in speech and attire for their safety;
- ❖ Take precautions for their digital safety;
- ❖ Media heads to adopt strategies to ensure the safety of their journalists in the field;
- ❖ Journalists be united under a common umbrella unlike the prevailing multiplicity of journalism associations out there;
- ❖ Journalists be conscious of the 5 WH questions and stay within the framework of the ethics and deontologist of the profession;
- ❖ Journalists be part of the solution and not the user generated content;
- ❖ Organizers create platform to dish out lessons on digital security;
- ❖ Rethink the concept of myth-information;
- ❖ Local government to equip bloggers with knowledge on the right way to blog;
- ❖ Workshop for CSOs to open discussions on how they can better engage in peace efforts.

❖ NB: To participants, if all these are put in place by all stakeholders, it will go a long way to better the practice of journalism in the southwest region and facilitate the fight against disinformation in the region.



**Family picture**

## **XI. ANNEXES**

[first presentation](#)

[second presentation](#)

[third presentation](#)

[Satisfaction questionnaire results](#)