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**THE ROLE OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN THE FIGHT AGAINST  
HIV/AIDS AMONGST THE WOMEN IN CAMEROON: CASE  
OF THE CAMEROON POST NEWSPAPER.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

HIV/AIDS has been a serious challenge which has plagued the world at large especially Africa. This thesis; *The role of the print media in the fight against HIV/AIDS amongst the women of Cameroon; Case of the Cameroon Post newspaper* investigates the strategies and techniques that have been used by the Cameroon post newspaper in the fight against HIV/AIDS amongst the women in Cameroon.

This work also explores the gender angle of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon by giving an account of the higher prevalence in women than men. Gender inequality in Cameroon has generally positioned the women in an inferior position which limits them from certain rights especially sexual rights. Thus HIV/AIDS prevalence is higher in the female folk than the male.

The findings have been done by making use of both the qualitative and quantitative research methods because they complement each other. Data for this work is obtained from an online archive of the Cameroon post newspaper where all editions of the newspaper since 2004 till present are found. Interpretations have been done by a detailed and careful content analysis of all the HIV/AIDS related news items that were available.

The work also presents a brief history of the evolution of the Cameroon press and does not also fail to make recommendations for a better tackling of HIV/AIDS problems amongst the women and why not the general population of Cameroon

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## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to God Almighty , who is the giver of academic inspirations and successes, and whose constant guidance, love and care has enabled me produce this work.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CAMNEWS: Cameroon News Agency

CD4: Cells with molecules that help initiate the body's response to invading viruses.

CHGA: Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa

HIV: Human Immune Virus

KPNC: Kamerun People National Congress

MSM: Men having Sex with Men

NGOs: Non- Governmental Organizations

SWAA: Society for Women and AIDS in Africa

STIs: Sexually transmitted Infections

UN: United Nations

UNAIDS: United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNICEF: United Nations Children Emergency Fund

UPC: Union population du Cameroun.

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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **BACKGROUND**

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been a major health hazard that has plagued the world at large especially Africa over the few last decades considering that a cure to AIDS has not yet been found. According to Jeffrey Sachs (2005), the HIV/AIDS pandemic is one of the most ferociously contagious diseases in history. A 2007 statistics from UNAIDS and WHO states that, over 6800 persons get infected with the virus per day and it was estimated that about 33.2 million people were living with the HIV virus by the year 2007. Sub Saharan Africa is however the most infected area in the world as by the year 2007 about 22.5million people in the region were living with the virus. (UNAIDS, WHO 2007).

Cameroon belongs to the Sub Saharan countries and like other countries of the region, the rate of HIV transmission has been increasing as people are continually infected on a daily basis. Although Cameroon may not be the most infected country in the region, the rate of spread of the virus over the last decade has been alarming, with women being the most infected as a result of their vulnerability and susceptibility to the virus unlike the men. There were about 510.000 people living with HIV in Cameroon by 2007 and young people are most affected with one- third of those infected being in the 15 to 49 age range (UNAIDS 2007). UNAIDS statistics in 2007 further reveals that, women account for about 60 percent of infected persons in both the rural and urban areas of Cameroon. Women in Cameroon generally get infected at early ages. According to the 2004 Cameroon demographic and health survey, the rate of infection of women is highest between the ages of 15 and 29 years and was about 10.3 percent as opposed that of men which is highest between the ages of 35 and 39 years and was about 8.6 percent as of the year 2004. The higher rates of infection amongst women can however be attributed to factors such as hardship and poverty which has pushed many girls into prostitution, lack of or low levels of education, and the fact that women are biologically and naturally more vulnerable to the virus than men. According to Tamsin Wilton (2000:82), variations in the rate of sexually transmitted infections between different

groups are largely due to social, cultural or structural factors rather than intrinsic biological differences. It is very cultural in Cameroon for men to have more than one wife, or have one wife and many mistresses and concubines. Also women in Cameroon are more often than not subjected to their husband who usually has the sole rights to decide when to have sex and whether or not to have protected sex.

According to IRIN NEWS (2007), the disparities in the rate of HIV infection between the male and female folk (higher rates in females) in Cameroon can also be explained by the existence of gender inequality. HIV rates are generally high in areas of weak public services, extensive poverty and where there is gender inequality. The subordination of women manifested through abusive practices such as rape and female genital mutilation in some parts of Cameroon are all possible methods of HIV transmission. Also, the partiality of the gender laws in Cameroon, which legalizes polygamy has also exposed a lot of women to the risk of contracting the HIV virus and has therefore been a contributing factor to the high rates of infection amongst women.

Communication is a very instrumental and fundamental aspect of human life that has played a great role in the process of development. According to James Lull (2000:10), *communication is the social nexus where interpersonal relations and technological innovation, political, economic incentives and socio-cultural ambitions, light entertainment and serious information, local environment and global influences, form and content, substance and style all intersect interact and influence each other.*

Various forms of communication have played contributing roles in the fight against HIV/AIDS by creating awareness and sensitizing people. The media are social institutions that are vital for culture and politics and play an important role in everyday life. According to Allan Bell (1998), news stories are central to human nature and are a core part of social identity, thus journalists write stories with structure, order, viewpoint and values thereby giving expressions to daily happenings of the society. Journalism basically aims at providing citizens with news and information. The mass media in Cameroon has been



instrumental in the fight against HIV/AIDS by means of educative, information and even other stories of human interest which has influenced a lot of people especially women in adopting strategies that serve as prevention and treatment to HIV/AIDS.

The Cameroon media has played a great role in the process of development in the country. For so many years in Cameroon the media was in the hands of the government, and there was no press freedom. According to Eribo & Tanjong (2002), the media was a watch dog serving the government, as its activities were usually censored. The media was however liberated through laws that granted press freedom in Cameroon as a result of criticisms by disgruntled Cameroonians and other foreign countries as well as international organizations (Eribo & Tanjong 2002). The liberation of the media nevertheless led to the birth of private newspapers, radios and television stations which are obviously more critical and objective than the government owned media. It is worth noting that although the private media are more critical, it is equally not necessarily very accurate and fair, because of the high rates of corruption coupled with the low levels of democracy in Cameroon. It is still dangerous to report on subjects that are considered sensitive to the government, such as corruption, army and above all the secessionist movement in the English speaking region of Cameroon (IRIN NEWS 2007).

The “*Cameroon Post*” is one of the newspapers that emerged as a result of press liberation in Cameroon. It is an English newspaper and is therefore more critical because the Anglophones in Cameroon have a long history of marginalization since they constitute the minority and represent just two out of the ten provinces of Cameroon (Eribo & Tanjong 2002). Anglophone Cameroonians are therefore usually very sensitive to crucial issues due to their bitterness on how they have been treated in their own country. The Cameroon Post newspaper has been contributing in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Cameroon especially through news stories and educative information and knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

## **THE GENDER ANGLE OF HIV/AIDS IN CAMEROON**

Gender inequality has been practiced since time immemorial in Cameroon. Although the phenomena has been improving as a result of civilization and laws passed by international organizations such as the United Nations, women in Cameroon still face discrimination in political, economical and even social spheres of life. It should be noted that poverty is one of the major reasons for the high prevalence of HIV in many developing countries. According to Barnette & Whiteside (2002), AIDS is a result of uneven spread of resources in the world. Aside from poverty, the existence of gender inequality in Cameroon has also been a contributing factor to the high rates of HIV/AIDS amongst the women thereby hindering development.

### **FACTORS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE HIGHER PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS AMONG WOMEN IN CAMEROON.**

According to IRIN NEWS (2007), the practice of early and forced marriage in Cameroon has been a contributing factor to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst young girls or married teenagers in Cameroon. The minimum age of consent to marriage for girls is lower than that of boys. It is 16 years for women and 19 years for men (International Women's Rights Action Watch 1999). Many girls especially in the Northern part of Cameroon have been forced into early marriages in order to achieve economic gains. According to Glynn et al (2001), Studies from some cities in Cameroon, Kenya and Zambia have revealed that married teenage women are more likely to be HIV positive than the unmarried ones. They however suggest that sexual initiation occurs earlier for married teenage women, who have sexual intercourse frequently and are therefore more likely to be contaminated with the HIV virus by their husband who is likely to be older and HIV positive unlike the partners of the unmarried teenagers. Also majority of these young girls are unable to negotiate safe sex or the use of condoms with their husbands because they lack the bargaining power in their marriage (Clark et al, 2006).

According to the discussion outcomes of CHGA (2004), the patriarchal nature of African societies continues to shape women's sexual behavior. It further argue that there exists a silence culture that surrounds sex and dictates that "good" women are expected to be passive and ignorant in decision making or suggestions relating to their role in sexual activity thereby making it difficult for women to be proactive in negotiating safer sex. African women generally still live in a world where they are expected to be submissive to men and where it is unacceptable for a woman to say no to unwanted or unprotected sex.(Discussion outcomes of CHGA, 2004). Hence female HIV/AIDS prevalence is bound to be high in such a society.

Violence against women and the existence of certain abusive practices in Cameroon also accounts for the high rates of HIV infection amongst the women. According Nyamnjoh (2005), violence against women in Cameroon usually occurs at three levels, namely; state, community and personal levels. They further assert that at the community and personal levels, factors such as tradition, cultural values and poverty are seen as accounting for the practice while at the national level, the absence of laws that specifically criminalizes domestic violence or marital rape and acceptance of the principle that a man has "disciplinary rights" over his wife by corrupt and biased state judges fuels the practice in Cameroon (Nyamnjoh 2005). Thus activities like rape though illegal has been occurring rampantly in Cameroon. According to an IRIN NEWS (2007) report, newspaper coverage revealed that rape was becoming increasingly alarming in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala as the courts in Douala heard up to about 40 cases of rape per month.

Also female genital mutilation is practiced in some parts of Cameroon. Although it is not very common, it is practiced in the Far North, South West and East Provinces of Cameroon. According to UNICEF (2007), one to two percent of women have undergone female genital mutilation. A report on Women's Reproductive Rights in Cameroon asserts that female genital mutilation is performed without anesthesia and under non-hygienic conditions by untrained practitioners and it sometimes results to fatal or serious health complications. Thus, it can be argued that a proportion of women in Cameroon are HIV

positive thanks to abusive practices such as rape and female genital mutilation (UNICEF 2007).

The existence of “compulsory heterosexuality” in Cameroon has also played a great role in the spread of HIV amongst women. According to Abelow et al (1993: 241), compulsory heterosexuality is heterosexuality which has both been forcibly and subliminally imposed on women who have been convinced to believe that marriage as well as sexual orientation towards men is inevitable even if it is unsatisfying to them. Compulsory heterosexuality is thus very common in Cameroon as many women have married men due to the necessity for them to survive economically, to have children who would not suffer from economic deprivation, to remain respectable and do what was expected of them, and above all because heterosexual romance has been considered the ultimate since it has been represented as the great female adventure, duty, as well as a fulfillment. According to Connell (2005), heterosexuality is the sexual preference of most people either implicitly or explicitly.

According to IRIN NEWS (2007), the reasons women tend to marry men to depend on in Cameroon are the fact that more men are educated than women and hence they tend to be more qualified for professional well paid jobs and thus financially more stable than the women. Figures from Cameroons National Institute of Statistics indicate that 58 percent of girls are enrolled in primary schools as opposed to 83 percent for boys and 50 percent of the boys’ complete primary school meanwhile only 37 percent of girls graduate from primary school (IRIN NEWS 2007).

HIV is however mostly transmitted through heterosexual relationships. According to WHO (2006), the overwhelming majority of HIV transmission globally is up to 80 percent as a result of condomless heterosexual relationships. The high level of heterosexual relationships that exists in Cameroon can therefore also explain the high rates of HIV infection amongst women because sex between women rarely results to the transfer of diseases. According to Tamsin Wilton (2000), sex between women does not involve semen, which offers a particular effective medium of transmission for micro- organisms including

HIV. Research and survey into sexual health confirms that sex between women is generally an inefficient route for the transmission of infections (Tamsin Wilton, 2000)

Religion and culture has also played a great role in the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst women in Cameroon. Women's personal lives are influenced by the variety of religious experiences to which they have been exposed (Iris Berger & Frances White, 1999). Polygamy is legal in Cameroon and practiced mostly in the Muslim communities of Cameroon since it is in line with the Muslim religion. Many women in Cameroon are in polygamous marriages where they have a greater chance of contracting HIV virus. In many cultures as in Cameroon, the route to adult status and economic security for women is through motherhood and women often lack the power to control sexual encounters.

Tamsin Wilton (2000) argues that although a majority of sex acts carry little or no risk of HIV transmission as only penile penetration is dangerous, nothing could be more difficult than safe sex. He further explains that it is because penile penetration is of greatest significance in most countries and cultures where non-penetrative sex is sometimes branded as "immature", "not real sex" and even considered "kinky" and "sinful". Also certain cultures in Cameroon encourage men to inherit the widow of their late brother. (IRIN NEWS 2007).

According to IRIN NEWS (2007), traditional and customary laws in Cameroon continue to affect women's rights and often take precedence over all laws protecting women. In Cameroon, a woman is often considered a property of her husband, and some cultures even forbid women from inheriting their late husband's property. Widows in some parts of Cameroon are forced to marry a brother of their deceased husband (IRIN NEWS 2007). Such a practice equally goes to increase the rate of spread of HIV/AIDS amongst the women of Cameroon.

Illiteracy and low level of education for most Cameroonian girls is also a reason for the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the female folk. More men are educated than females in Cameroon because the girls usually have fewer opportunities to attend school.

According to UNICEF (2004), girls are usually kept at home to do domestic chores while being prepared for early marriage. Also, due to the cost of education, parents in Cameroon will prefer to send the boy child to school rather than the girl if they are capable of educating just one child. This explains why up to 60 percent of boys usually complete primary school as opposed to 37 percent for girls (IRIN NEWS 2007). Many illiterate girls are therefore more likely to get infected with the HIV virus as most of them are ignorant about HIV preventive strategies and some are even unable to read or understand anti HIV messages from the media or from social workers. Thus, girls who are generally not educated are more likely to be exposed to poverty, violence, hunger and exploitation (UNICEF 2004). They are thus at greater risk of contracting diseases including HIV/AIDS.

The fact that women are biologically more vulnerable to the HIV virus than men also explains why the rate of infection is higher for women in Cameroon than the men. Women are generally more vulnerable to HIV than men and there are three women infected for every two men (UNAIDS 2006). A woman is twice more likely to acquire gonorrhoea from an infected male partner than is a man from an infected female partner and it was estimated that women are anywhere from two to three times more vulnerable to HIV infection during heterosexual intercourse than are men (Doyal 1995).

Gender inequality is generally highly practiced in underdeveloped countries and it can be deduced from a close examination of factors that account for the high prevalence of HIV amongst the women in Cameroon that primitivism, poverty and ignorance which are all impediments to development are the major issues contributing to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN CAMEROON

The Cameroon press like the press of other countries has experienced a drastic evolution on a good footing. Although various forms of traditional communication existed during the pre colonial period in Cameroon, the first attempt to set up a media system in Cameroon was through the establishment of a printing press in 1903 which led to the circulation of newspapers with the very first one being printed in Germany, the then colonial master of Cameroon (Eribo & Jong, 1997). The paper was called *Das Evangelische Monatsblatt*. Subsequently, many other newspapers came up in Cameroon such as *Mulee-Ngea*, *Muendi*, *Ma Mwanga*, *Armsblatt* and *Mefoe*. ( Eribo & Jong, 1997).

The defeat of the Germans in Cameroon after World War 1 and the subsequent administration of Cameroon as trust territories under Britain and France also had an impact on the Cameroon Press. Due to the French colonial system of assimilation, many news papers especially the influential ones were printed in Cameroon either partially in French and other indigenous local languages or fully in French. According to Eribo and Tanjong (2002), *L'effort Camerounaise* and *la press du Cameroun* were the two most influential newspapers in Cameroon by the year 1955.

It is important to note here that the repressive nature of the French, during the French colonial regime led to the fight for press freedom in Cameroon. According to Nyamnjoh (2002), the period was referred to as the “golden age” of press freedom in Cameroon. By the end of 1959, there were about 71 publications in Cameroon, most of which failed to stand the test of time due to limited finances and colonial press censorship (Nyamnjoh 2002)

While French Cameroon was greatly developed by the French in all aspects including the press, the British part of Cameroon was neglected. Development of the press was totally stagnant and no newspaper existed in British Southern Cameroon. British

Southern Cameroonians only benefitted from newspapers published in Nigeria which was also a British colony (Eribo & Tanjong 2005). Such newspapers which were published in Nigeria included the *Daily Express*, the *Times of Britain* and the *Daily Times*. According to Nyamnjoh (2002), Southern Cameroon adopted the free press system in Nigeria until reunification of British and French Cameroon in 1961 when Southern Cameroon newspapers became subject to the same tight censorship that French Cameroon experienced under the first appointed president of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo.

The independence of Cameroon marked the birth of more newspapers in Cameroon which had political agenda and criticized both the colonial powers and the ruling government of Ahmadou Ahidjo (Nyamnjoh 2002). *La Flambeau* and *LA Voix du Peuple* were some of the newspapers that were established to propagate UPC activities. (UPC was a radical opposition party which criticized the Ahmadou Ahidjo regime). According to Eribo and Tanjong (2002), the reintroduction of multi-parties in 1966 led to the creation of more political newspapers which defended the interest of various political parties. For instance, the *Cameroon Times* was established to promote the activities of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) meanwhile the *Cameroons Champion* was established to promote activities of another political party called Kamerun People National Congress (KPNC).

It is important to note that ownership of the press in Cameroon was in the hands of both the government and private individuals. *Agence Camerounaise du press* (ACAP) and *la press du Cameroun* were news agencies created to protect the interest of the government in the press (Eribo and Tanjong 2002). Eribo and Tanjong (2005) argue that the absence of media laws in Cameroon by the mid 1960s had caused a lot of chaos in the media. Hence by 1966, press laws were passed which ensured an efficient running of the press system. By 1978, a Cameroon printing and publishing company called CAMNEWS was created (Eribo & Tanjong 2005). Many other newspapers were then created during this period amongst which is the *Cameroon Tribune newspaper* which started off as a daily in French and weekly in English. According to Eribo and Tanjong (2005), the *Cameroun Post*, *Cameroon Times*,



*l'effort Camerounaise*, *Cameroon Panorama*, and *The Herald* are the current powerful newspapers in Cameroon.

The existence of absolute press freedom has been an issue in Cameroon for a very long period (Eribo & Tanjong 2005). Even with the change of power in 1982 when Paul Biya assumed the post of president of Cameroon, the idea of press freedom was still very theoretical. Indications were the banning of local publishing houses and the arrest and detention of many media practitioners who went contrary to government expectations (IRIN NEWS 2007). According to Nyamnjoh (2002), repression of the press was very common in Cameroon until in the 1990's when the waves of liberalism swept through Africa and hit Cameroon, thereby enabling the passing of laws which led to freedom of mass communication.

It is worth mentioning that although laws have been passed in Cameroon granting freedom of press, there is no actual press freedom in Cameroon as the press laws are being modified every now and then. Journalists in Cameroon are generally restricted from doing thorough investigative journalism in issues which the government is sensitive about such as the military and corruption. Thus many journalists have been arrested, tortured and detained for making reports that are contrary to government expectations. Some media houses have been suspended and others banned for being so critical of the government (Nyamnjoh 2002). It is suggested that the high level of corruption in Cameroon explains the absence of total press freedom.

## **PROBLEM AREA**

HIV/AIDS is sometimes perceived as a development problem. According to Jeffrey Sachs (2005), the HIV pandemic is largely associated with underdevelopment as a result of misrule and corruption and is an unmitigated tragedy and development disaster in Africa. HIV can be said to be both a cause of poverty and a result of poverty. In the case of Cameroon, the HIV pandemic has greatly affected the youthful population, thereby depriving

Cameroon of great minds and talent through AIDS deaths and subsequently leading to poverty. Economic growth in Cameroon has thus been negatively affected by HIV/AIDS. The massive investment on medications for HIV positive people has affected both the economy and development in Cameroon. Funds which would have been used in other domains of development have now been channelled into treating HIV/AIDS patients as well as catering for children orphaned by AIDS. Relentless absenteeism by AIDS patients from their jobs has also affected the economy negatively. HIV/AIDS has generally hampered development in Cameroon and still remains a great threat.

The HIV virus has predictably had devastating consequences as it has not only impeded development in Cameroon by reducing the valuable youthful and working population but has also brought about a lot of social problems and hardships. This is especially in areas where a lot of stigma is associated with the HIV/AIDS virus. Thus the misery, hardships as well as the economic degradation brought about by the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been enough motivation or reason why the media of Cameroon has taken up a challenge to fight against. The media of Cameroon has therefore brought about strategies to fight against HIV/AIDS in a bid to achieve development especially economic and political development as well as social tranquility.

## **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

Although HIV is usually perceived as a development problem which is attributed to poverty, it is equally a behavioral problem. Thus, HIV is a behavioral problem and its transmission can be avoided if individuals adopt the necessarily behaviors that will prevent them from being exposed to risky situations. The mass media can be very instrumental in increasing awareness, knowledge and even in the promotion of interpersonal communication about HIV/AIDS. The purpose of my research is therefore to investigate the various techniques used by The *Cameroon Post* news paper to promote responsible and safe behavior amongst the women in an attempt to reduce the rate of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are my research questions;

- What role has the Cameroon Post newspaper played in the fight or struggle against HIV /AIDS amongst the women of Cameroon?
- What techniques is the Cameroon Post newspaper using to fight against HIV/AIDS amongst women in Cameroon?

## CONTEXT, SETTING AND LIMITATIONS

This work focuses on the Cameroon Post newspaper and all relevant HIV/AIDS related news stories within the time frame of 2004 to 2009. The news items are composed of information and knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention such as promoting the use of condoms, encouraging abstinence and fidelity as well as encouraging people to go for their HIV screening test. However, the activity of the newspaper usually depends on the political, economic and social situation of the country at a given point in time. The *Cameroon Post* newspaper has been chosen for this research because it is a privately owned newspaper and it is therefore likely to be more objective and not biased about HIV issues; unlike the government owned newspaper agencies which most often than not in developing countries serves as a watchdog to the State and maybe therefore be biased in presenting HIV /AIDS related stories in order to achieve a hidden agenda.

Also, my choice of limiting the fight against HIV/AIDS by the print media amongst women is motivated by the fact that, the women of Cameroon account for a greater proportion of the total population. The life expectancy as well as the infant mortality rates between the male and female in Cameroon attempts to explain the greater proportion of women in the total population. According to a 2008 Cameroon demographic report, life expectancy for women in Cameroon is 54 years as opposed to 52 years for men, while the rate of infant mortality is 69.38 percent for males and 59.62 percent for females

([Www.indexmundi.com/Cameroon/demographics](http://www.indexmundi.com/Cameroon/demographics)). Women are equally more vulnerable and susceptible to HIV than men. According to Doyal (1995 :77), it was estimated that women are anywhere from two to three times more vulnerable to HIV infection during heterosexual intercourse than are men.

Due to financial limitations to travel to Cameroon to conduct this research in the field, maximum use has been made of Cameroon Post's online archive through which all the news stories or editions as from 2004 are stored. Hence collecting reliable and credible data from the location of studies (Sweden) has been possible.

My work however has its limitation. Although very much has been written about HIV/AIDS, there is a problem of availability of reliable literature on the current situation in Cameroon (especially the situation of the interior or remote villages) because most writers from Cameroon have been more interested in tackling the political problems of the country due to the unsatisfactory nature of the government.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Although the methodology for my work is basically qualitative, the primary source of data has been obtained through a content analysis methodology. Both the qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used in my work as the two methods work together to complement each other. My data has however been collected from an online archive of the Cameroon post newspaper website (<http://www.postnewsline.com/archives.htm>). The data is based on the activities of the newspaper over a period of five years (from July 2004 to July 2009) and it has been collected through a careful, detailed follow up as well as observation of all editions of the Cameroon Post newspaper in an attempt to target all the articles which provides information that works towards the eradication of HIV/AIDS amongst women in Cameroon.

A total of 153 HIV/AIDS related stories and news articles were found and 17 of those articles contained information that directly addressed women, 7 were directly

addressing children and only 2 of the articles contained information that directly addressed men. Meanwhile the rest of the 127 articles contained information which targeted the general public or all groups of people irrespective of age and gender. It is worth mentioning that all the news articles have been used except the 2 which directly address men because the work is limited to women. Hence a total of 151 news articles have been used with much emphasis on the 17 articles directly addressing women. Findings and interpretations have however been done through a qualitative method which has made use of the thematic discourse analysis approach under sub topics such as message themes, message techniques, journalistic forms, sources of information conveyed and news actors. The subsequent chapters nonetheless present the methodology and analysis in details.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Flick, almost everything which is researchable probably connects with an existing neighboring field thereby making it naïve for an individual to think that there is still a new field in which nothing has been written before to be exploited. (Flick 2006:58). In this light, I have therefore used available published and unpublished material which contains information, ideas and even written evidence and facts about my topic but have given reference properly and appropriately where it is due.

My approaches, arguments and concepts are in line with the available course programme literature and material. Hence I have made use of material from books, journals and articles obtained from Lund University library. I have equally used a lot of web based literature on HIV, Communication and gender inequality in Africa as a whole.

## **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

A lot of personal background and experience has also been used in this work. Being a Female Cameroonian who has lived in Cameroon for several years in the midst of gender inequality, the outrageous current prevalence of HIV/AIDS as well as the recent

development in communication and the mass media especially the print media, I have therefore been exposed to a lot of issues and discourses with regards the media's role in the fight against the HIV/AIDS virus in general.

### **OUTLINE OF STUDY**

This research consists of 6 chapters. Chapter one comprises the introduction which includes the background, the gender angle of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon, a short history of the evolution of the print media in Cameroon, purpose of study, research questions, context, setting and limitations as well as the methodology description.

Chapter two is basically literature review. Meanwhile Chapter three consists of the methodology proper; a detailed description of the methodology. Chapter four is findings and interpretations. Chapter 5 is activities of the newspaper versus reality and the final chapter is the concluding chapter which also consists of recommendation

## **CHAPTER TWO; LITERATURE REVIEW: MEDIA AND HIV/AIDS**

A lot has generally been written on the impact of the mass media on various aspects of HIV/AIDS.

### **MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AND HIV BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE**

According to Bessinger Ruth et al (2004), mass media campaigns play a central role among a range of interventions which influences behavioral change for the prevention of HIV and other STIs. The use of mass media for instance can be instrumental in promoting condom use as a way of preventing STIs, including HIV. In a quantitative study aimed at investigating the impact of multi media campaign exposure on knowledge and use of condoms in the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STIs in Uganda, results revealed that there exist a positive relationship between exposure of media and knowledge of and use of condom by both men and women towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STIs (Bessinger et al, 2004). The study further revealed that, majority of both men and women who have been exposed to mass media (radio, television and printed materials) messages about HIV/AIDS and other STIs were more aware that condoms prevent HIV infections and some had used condoms during their last sexual encounter than those who were not exposed to mass media messages on HIV/AIDS.

Although the relationship between exposure to mass media campaigns and knowledge of and use of condom was generally positive, gender equally played a great role as it was realized that most of the women who practiced the use of condom in Uganda were mostly single women or educated women (Bessinger et al, 2004). Bessinger et al (2004) further suggests that most married women lack the ability to negotiate safe sex or use condom with their husbands in a typical African context where gender inequality has restricted women from such rights. Also, most uneducated girls or women lacked the ability to negotiate the use of condom with their lovers/husbands because most of them are not financially independent and they are thus forced to adhere to what the man wants.

According to Bessinger et al, (2004), mass media exposure could itself be influenced by condom knowledge and use, resulting in an overestimation of campaign effects. Thus there exists a positive evaluation of communication programmes, relying in self reported exposure measures because some people with a favorable attitude towards condom use may be more likely to show interest in the mass media messages. With such interest, there is the likelihood that they would practice the messages preached by the media and thus may well remember and report when asked in a survey than those who have not a favorable attitude towards the use of condoms.

Bessinger et al. (2004) further argues that increase in use of condoms must not necessarily be associated with mass media exposure campaigns but could be attributed to broader societal changes that would have positively affected sexual health awareness or perhaps the impact of other programmatic interventions.

Wolffers and Ivan (1997) in analysing experiences in workshops held on the role of the media in HIV/AIDS awareness and education in Asian countries (Turkey, Bangladesh, Malaysia Vietnam and Thailand), between 1993 and 1996, revealed that Southeast Asian media are specifically reluctant to make the connection between sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS unless in a sensational and stereotyping way. According to them, this is because of the media's inability to oppose the authorities due to their lack of appropriate knowledge and the feeling of insecurity. This assertion can be explained by the fact that state-owned media are often controlled by the government authorities who do not care much about HIV since many high ranking individuals are not yet infected. Also, the fact that media workers in Asia are limited in their decision about what and how to produce explains the reluctance in handling the relation between sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS (Wolffers & Ivan 1997).



According to Wolfers and Ivan (1997), most of the people working with the Southeast Asian media have a stereotype that HIV infected people are deviant. This is nevertheless justified by the fact that in Southeast Asia, drug users and sex workers were amongst the first group of people to become infected with HIV (Wolfers & Ivan 1997). Thus the media subsequently looks down on them or are indifferent to their needs.

Wolfers and Ivan (1997) equally observed that, generally, the Southeast Asia media has done very little to change existing cultural values and prejudices about sexuality and the situation of people who are living with HIV/AIDS; unlike in North America and Europe where the media has played a great role in changing views and awareness about HIV.

Generally, information campaigns which delivers knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS usually aims at inducing knowledge that results to individual preventive behaviors because information and knowledge alone are insufficient to eradicate new HIV/AIDS infections (Frolich and Vazquez- Alvarez 2009). Information campaigns are considered to be the most cost effective public response to reduce the number of new HIV infections amidst the absence of an effective vaccine to stop HIV/AIDS transmission and the very expensive medical treatment of HIV positive people ( Frolich and Vazquez- Alvarez 2009)

There exists a relationship between an individual's HIV status, knowledge about HIV and HIV risk related attitudes. Frolich and Vazquez (2009) in an assessing the causal relationship between HIV knowledge and HIV status finds out that there could be a positive relation between an individual's HIV status and knowledge about HIV and subsequently HIV risk related attitudes. Thus, HIV knowledge may be as a result of an individual's HIV positive status. It can however be deduced that knowledge about the HIV virus and its consequences may be acquired after the individual becomes HIV positive either as a result of frequent visits to doctors or medical practitioners or as a result of an innate interest which is motivated by the struggle for survival . The study also provide empirical evidence that supports the positive

effect of information campaigns in terms of shifting the behavior and attitude in the population such as agreeing that it is important to reduce the number of sexual partners to avoid HIV/AIDS, agreeing to use condoms regularly and correctly, or that it is important to target school children with regards to sexual education (Frolich and Vazquez 2009).

Participatory communication has a positive impact on preventing HIV/AIDS amongst homosexuals and men having sex with men (MSM). A study in China by M. Yun Gao and S. Wang (2007), aimed at investigating whether or not participatory communication involvement leads to changes in gays and men having sex with men with regards to knowledge, attitudes and safer sex practices and social norms reveals that, after communication participation, the level of knowledge and attitudes towards preventing HIV/AIDS was increased. Results from the study therefore shows that basic knowledge about safe and unsafe sex greatly increased after participatory communication by both gay men and men having sex with men. In a similar manner, the rate of correct attitudes towards HIV/AIDS information drastically increased after participatory communication by about 72 percent. And finally, findings from this same study also showed that after participatory communication, there was a significant positive change in the ability for both gay people and men having sex with men to always use condoms with regular sexual partners for vaginal, anal and oral sex. (M Yun Gao & S. Wang 2007). They also observed a reduction in the number of sexual partners by those who participated in the communication.

## **MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AND HIV MYTHS**

According to Julianne Brown et al (1996), the mass media are central to the representation of risk as a cultural construct in their role of mediating between scientific, medical and public health knowledge and general knowledge of members of the public. In investigating the role played by the Australian news media in reporting a case of HIV/AIDS risk relating to a medical practitioner (an obstetric) who was tested HIV positive and the New

South Wales Department's subsequent efforts to trace and conduct an HIV test on 149 obstetric patients on whom the doctor had operated since 1992, two years prior to the discovery of his HIV positive status, it was discovered that the media used a lot of metaphorical language, analogy as well as explicit or implied cross referencing of aspects of the story with other events or discourses in ways designed to suggest equivalence or parallel meaning (Brown et al, 1996). Brown et al (1996) observed that the media in the presentation of the story tried to present the medical practitioner as "innocent" and has been infected by the "guilty" obstetric patients especially at a point where all the 149 women he had operated upon had not been traced.

According to Brown et al (1996), readers and viewers were encouraged to make sense of the events in certain ways through the journalistic and producers' choices and conventions of news framing in reporting the story. Headlines focusing on locating the women rather used police search language with negative connotation as if the women were "dangerous", "diseased" or "criminals". Some of the headlines read as follows; "*Women in HIV round up*", "*Surgeon sparks HIV hunt*", "*39 Women wanted*", "*HIV doctor sparks search for mothers*" etc. The "missing" women were portrayed as women desperately needing to be contacted and given a bad news (Brown et al 1996).

Findings from the study also suggested that the Australian media is stereotyped about certain issues regarding HIV/AIDS as the media presented the information as if the medical practitioner had no other possibility to contract HIV in his private life and the only risk he was exposed were the patients he attended to. According to Brown et al (1996), in a subsequent follow up of the story at a point when many of the women, except 22 had been found and tested HIV negative, a TV news bulletin and one newspaper went further to say "*22 left on a search list that began with 8000*" because about 8000 women had given birth at the hospital since 1992; a time when the obstetric lastly tested negative. The Australian media however encouraged the stereotype that certain groups of people are "deviant" who deserve to be marginalized and stigmatized such as men having sex with men, sex workers and drug users. According to Brown et al (1996), the media presented the "deviant" as those who

“deserve” HIV while others were merely “victims”. Following developments from the stories, after the obstetric patients were all tested HIV negative, the media immediately changed from presenting the case as a responsible doctor who had acquired HIV while on duty, to presenting the obstetric as an HIV positive gay man who had acquired HIV during his personal life (Brown et al 1996). The media is noted for presenting stories in a manner that suits their interest. Thus every aspect of the story to be disclosed should have been of little interest to the media, had the investigations run its course with the resultant negative test results in all the women. According to Brown et al, (1996), the search was certainly a prerequisite for the story’s news worthiness.

### **MASS MEDIA CAMPAINGS AND HIV STIGMA**

Communication programs aimed at improving knowledge about HIV infection potentially have roles to play in reducing stigma (Stella Babalola et al 2009). According to their study which aimed at examining the role of HIV related media campaigns in HIV related stigma in Nigeria, results revealed that there was no strong relationship between community media saturation and an accepting attitude towards PLHIV (people living with HIV).

Findings from the study however underscores the importance of communication initiatives that seek to provide factual information, correct misinformation about HIV, and effectively addresses unrealistic fears about transmission in efforts to improve attitudes towards people living with HIV and foster acceptance by the general society (Babalola et al, 2009). Feedback from the study also confirmed that personal exposure to media campaigns is strongly associated with increased knowledge about HIV and equally fosters HIV knowledge especially in women as communication exposure were three times as likely to display a high level of knowledge in women exposed to communication than their peers with low level of communication exposure.

According to Babalola et al, (2009), results from the findings are an indication that the media alone cannot greatly have an impact on both the perception towards HIV

positive people as well as the treatment of PLHIV. Hence it is imperative for the creation of more government agencies and community groups to foster non- discriminatory treatment of people living with HIV and promoting their welfare rather than relying on the media solely.

## **CHAPTER THREE; METHODOLOGY**

Although the methodology is basically qualitative, a content analysis methodology has been used to derive data which has been relevant for the qualitative analysis. In essence, both quantitative (content analysis) and qualitative analysis have been used in the work. According to Flick (2006), both the qualitative and quantitative research methods are complementary as they both contribute towards a better understanding of a research. Also, both methods use tools or instruments to collect, organize and codify data and by using multiple measures of the phenomena, the likelihood of seeing all aspects of it arises. Thus, mixing both methods gives the research a different complementary strength thereby making the whole study understandable. According to David Deacon *et al.* (1999. 132), claims about frequency or lack of it has led to emphasis on the need for co-operation between qualitative and quantitative approaches in analyzing media content.

### **QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

In an investigating the role of the Cameroon Post Newspaper in the fight against HIV amongst women in Cameroon, data has been collected from the newspaper's online archive because editions of the newspaper from July 2004 till present are available. Data has been collected through a careful and detailed follow up and observation of all editions of the Cameroon Post Newspaper during which all the HIV/AIDS related stories have been extracted. According to David Deacon *et al* (1999, 132), content analysis provides a methodological approach for establishing patterns of representation in media content over a given period of time since it ensures a reasonable degree of reliability in the establishment of a pattern of media representation.

A total of 153 HIV/AIDS related news articles were found over the period from July 2004 to July 2009. It is important to note here that it is during this time interval that HIV/AIDS became glaring and very alarming in Cameroon as by this time, the impacts of HIV/AIDS had been so devastating in Cameroon. So many children had been orphaned by

HIV/AIDS, a huge amount of money had been spent on creating HIV/AIDS treatment centers and making the anti retroviral drugs available to HIV positive Cameroonians, and above all, reports from UNAIDS (2007) revealed that up to about 500.000 Cameroonians were reported to be living with the virus by the year 2007.

Of the 153 HIV/AIDS related stories obtained, 17 were directly addressing women, 7 addressing children and only 2 of the news articles directly addressed men. Meanwhile 127 news articles were of a general nature, with news stories which provides vital information about HIV/AIDS to women, men and children. It is worth mentioning that the newspaper paid more attention to women as there were up to 17 stories directly addressing women and only 7 for children and 2 for men. The reason is probably that women in Cameroon are more susceptible to HIV/AIDS than men. Indications of women susceptibility are however the presence of gender inequality in Cameroon which is manifested through violent acts such as rape, the existence of abusive practices in Cameroon such as female genital mutilation, the practice of polygamy in Cameroon which encourages men to have more than one wife, and above all, the fact that women are naturally and biologically more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases than men. According to Doyal (1995), women are twice more likely to acquire a sexually transmitted disease from an infected male partner than is a man from an infected female partner.

Although 153 HIV/AIDS related stories were obtained, only 151 of the stories have been used for the purpose of the research. Thus, only the two news articles that are addressing men directly have not been included in the analysis. The 7 articles addressing children directly are rather included because children constitute both boys and girls. This is so because the work aims at investigating the role of the newspaper in the fight against HIV/AIDS amongst women in Cameroon.

## **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

Qualitative research method generally aims at explaining social phenomenon and equally seeks to answer questions about why people behave the way they do, how opinions and attitudes are formed and how people are affected by the events around them. According to Flick (2006), the qualitative techniques are used in understanding what is informing individual opinion. This qualitative study of the role of the media in the fight against HIV/AIDS amongst the women in Cameroon has been done through thematic discourse analysis under the following sub topics.

- Message themes
- Message techniques
- Journalistic forms
- Sources of information conveyed
- News actors.

## **NB**

Basically, all the 153 HIV/AIDS related stories were selected through a detailed study of the content of all the news articles of the Cameroon post newspaper from 2004. The contents of the 153 HIV/AIDS related news articles were further studied during which it was realised that 17 stories had information which was directly addressing women, 7 directly addressed children and 2 directly addressed men. Also the articles have been classified under the various message themes, message techniques and journalistic forms after a detailed study of the content of each of the HIV/AIDS related story. The title of the articles have been used within the analysis. A link to the various articles is however available at the index page where the titles of each of the 153 articles are found.



It is however worth mentioning that both thematic discourse analysis and detailed content analysis have their shortcomings. A typical example is the fact that the analysis in this work have been done with the assumption that all the articles in the newspaper have relevant and necessary information for conclusion to be made.

According to Fairclough (1995) people create models of the things they know as well as their opinions. But in reality with respect to the case of Cameroon, these articles may not totally say all the things they know or think. This may however be as a result of the absence of total press freedom in Cameroon which can be further explained by the low levels of democracy coupled with the high intensity of corruption in Cameroon.

## **CHAPTER FOUR; FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

### **MESSAGE THEMES AND MESSAGE TECHNIQUES**

Message theme and technique embodies measures taken by the media to send the right message to the targeted group of people at the right time.

The use of relevant and appropriate message themes and techniques has been instrumental in journalistic writings in order to achieve its intended agenda. Both message themes and techniques have been effectively used by the Cameroon Post newspaper to curb the spread of HIV amongst the women in Cameroon. The message themes that has been widely used by the Cameroon post with regards fighting HIV/AIDS in Cameroon has been sub divided into the following;

1. HIV Prevention.
2. HIV testing
3. Anti Stigmatization of HIV
4. Hope for HIV/AIDS patients

Meanwhile the message technique has been sub divided into,

1. Educative and Informative.
2. Persuasive and dissuasive techniques.

Some of the message techniques and message themes have interacted to achieve the goal of curbing HIV/AIDS amongst women in Cameroon meanwhile others have been used independently.

### **HIV EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND PREVENTION**

The Cameroon post newspaper has been able to provide a lot of general information, and education about HIV/AIDS. In Journalism, a reader's attention to a news

article has been shown to have a positive correlation with the amount of information the theme conveys. Thus in a bid to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, the media in Cameroon (the Cameroon Post newspaper) has been so strategic in formulating themes that are both captivating and instantly educative.

Amongst the articles that targets women, HIV prevention has been a major theme that has been used to curb the spread of the pandemic amongst the women of Cameroon. Articles such as *Collaborating to prevent mother –to-child HIV infection, HIV could be reduced through female education, New products to protect women against HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS hastens tuberculosis infection-rural women, 900 women to attend Limbe AIDS conference, Women to prevent new HIV infections, Women delegate encourages the promotion of female condoms, peer educator target girls on HIV/AIDS, SWAA-Cameroon graduates peer educators on female condoms, Meme women urged to use condoms, Condoms prevent pregnancies, spread of AIDS and Rural women schooled on HIV/AIDS*, have provided a lot of education and information about HIV/AIDS prevention. According to UNICEF (2002), girls who are not educated are more likely to be victims of violence, hunger, exploitation and are at greater risk of contracting diseases including HIV. The article *collaborating to prevent Mother to child HIV infection*, instantly educates readers of the possibilities of an expectant mother infecting her unborn child. This however creates a sense of awareness to both expectant mothers and their partners as well as couples still looking forward to getting children on the need to get tested for HIV/AIDS before or during pregnancy so that the appropriate medical attention could be sought in order to curb mother-to -child transmission amongst the infected pregnant women.

Also, most of the articles mentioned above have provided education for women and girls on how to go about preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In a typical developing country like Cameroon where there exists gender imbalance and worst still where polygamy is legal and largely practiced, women have been encouraged to initiate safe sex through condom use. The article “*Meme women urged to use condoms*” which is a report on the divisional delegates address to women during their zonal tour, encouraged the use of condom as the

delegate demonstrated how to effectively use condoms and advised the women to use condoms on suspicions of unfaithfulness. Sentences from the article such as “...women must agree with their husbands to use condoms for the safety of both partners...” instantly informs and educates the women on the need to use condoms. The article *Condoms prevent pregnancies, spread of AIDS*, also encourages the use of condoms amongst women and girls in a bid to fight against HIV/AIDS amongst the women folk. The article *HIV/AIDS Could Be Reduced Through Female Education*, which is an interview granted by Dr. Shang, bears the hallmark of such an approach. In this article Dr. Shang targets the female folk at a time when they were increasingly at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS from acts like rape and even commercial sexual activities which sometimes includes the plain rendering of sexual favor in exchange of money and even jobs. According to Dr. Shang in the interview, “...there is need for educational empowerment to let them acquire some level of education so that they could better understand what it means to have your rights as a woman and to be ready to know how to protect yourself. And also to give women the chance to cultivate a sense of responsibility of knowing that they have the right to attaining whatever position without having to sleep with a man...” Such an interview nonetheless encourages women to be independent and have a sense of responsibility so that they should avoid accepting sex offers from men in exchange of money and position in order to reduce their chances of getting infected with HIV/AIDS.

Also the Cameroon Post newspaper by covering conferences aimed at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst women has been able to educate other women of the public on the existence of female condoms as well as information on how to use them. In the article “*SWAA-Cameroon Graduates peer educators on female condoms*” which is a report on the graduation of peer educators on female condoms by the Society for Women and Aids in Africa (SWAA Cameroon), information about the directives of using female condoms have been given . According to the article, women are asked to “...First verify if the condom is not expired for it can lead to other problems, ensure that the liquid has not dried up and rub the condom for the liquid to spread. It is that liquid that enables the condom to stick to the walls of the vagina. Then curve the condom into a figure-eight to insert it...” In the article

*“Women delegates encourages the promotion of female condoms”* the Douala provincial delegate of Women Empowerment and Family, Suzanne Patricia Bebey called for the promotion of female condoms amongst female students by encouraging them not to be ashamed to buy and be in possession of female condoms as it reduces the risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

It is worth mentioning that some of the message themes are however so poignant that they leave readers at a point to ponder about even if they never have the opportunity to read the full article. For instance, the article *HIV/AIDS hastens tuberculosis infections-Rural women coordinator*, straight forwardly asserts there is a strong link between HIV/AIDS and other non sexually transmitted diseases such as tuberculosis. By all measures readers who read just the caption but not the entire article would still have got the message that efforts to combat tuberculosis through well known practices would count for nothing as long as measures to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS are not factored in. Therefore the masses need to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS to be able to put tuberculosis under control as well. Given that this same article informs and educates the masses that there is a relationship between HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, tuberculosis patients would be able to go for their HIV screening test in order to know their status and commence treatment. Also, although abstinence is not largely promoted in Cameroon, the *Cameroon Post* newspaper through the article *Women to prevent new HIV infections* has encouraged women to abstain from sex in order not to contract the HIV/AIDS virus as condoms are not 100 percent efficient. In this article women have been encouraged to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS new infections by making discussions about HIV/AIDS related issues to feature always on the agenda of social gatherings such as family meetings and other money saving groups.

The slogan “prevention is better than cure” seems to be a guiding principle to the *Cameroon Post* newspaper as a majority of the news articles gives helpful information to encourage HIV/AIDS prevention.

HIV/AIDS prevention is a theme that has not only been used to curb HIV/AIDS amongst women as it is generally advocated for in the entire public. In the article “*parents must be models to AIDS fight- Cameroon*”, parents have been urged to lead by examples in order to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. According to the article, “... *to secure an AIDS free future for the children, parents behavior towards their children must reflect morality, fidelity and all the other virtues that can help build a healthy society tomorrow.*” The article “*Materials to fight AIDS donated to Universities*” informs the general public about the provision of HIV testing equipment in the universities and thus encourages students to go for their free HIV/AIDS screening test in order to curb the spread of the virus. The articles “*SUNAIDS develops telephone facility to fight HIV/AIDS*”, “*Center for disease control to boost HIV prevention*”, “*Cameroonian mayor mobilizes against HIV/AIDS*”, “*The fight against HIV/AIDS; Who pays for our folly?*,” “*Abstinence, not condom is best defense for HIV/AIDS*” and “*Stick to your generation to stop AIDS*” have all provided information and education on HIV/AIDS prevention to the masses.

There is however no doubt that the use of condoms have been largely encouraged in curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS since it is easier to use condoms than to abstain from sexual activities. According to Kaleeba et al. (2000) and UNAIDS (2002), behavioral practices that could reduce the risk of people getting infected with the HIV virus includes an increased use of condom, the decision by young people to delay becoming sexually active, and a reduction or a decrease in commercial or transactional sex.

### **HIV/AIDS TESTING, TREATMENT AND HOPE FOR PATIENTS**

HIV/AIDS testing and treatment has been largely called for and encouraged all over the world as a result of the discovery of the anti retroviral treatment around the mid 1990s which prevents HIV positive people from deteriorating to the AIDS condition. UNAIDS (2002) reports reveal that, the anti retroviral drugs have greatly improved the prognosis for people living with HIV/AIDS and has dramatically reduced HIV/AIDS related mortality rate. HIV

testing and treatment is therefore a theme used by the Cameroon Post newspaper to curb the spread of the virus amongst women and even the general population.

With respect to HIV testing, the Cameroon Post newspaper through articles such as *Rural women schooled on HIV/AIDS* and *Collaborating to prevent mother-to –child HIV infection* has encouraged HIV screening test amongst women in an attempt to curb the spread of the deadly virus. Through these articles, pregnant women have been encouraged to do their HIV test and know their status so as to prevent their unborn babies from such a deadly disease. Also other women have been encouraged to know their status so as to commence treatment and adopt positive behavioral change that prevents the spread of the virus if they are found to be HIV positive. According to the article “*collaborating to prevent mother to-child HIV infection*”, the government will start scaling up anti-retroviral prophylaxis in pregnant women using bi-therapy. Such information has however encouraged many pregnant women to go for HIV test and subsequently commence treatment.

In a similar vein, the Cameroon Post newspaper has encouraged the general public to go for the HIV screening test. In the article *UN officials exhort ministers to go for public HIV test* the Cameroonian ministers and members of government are encouraged to do public HIV screening by setting examples so that other members of the public could follow. Following this article, the UN official has called on the high ranking ministers of Cameroon to emulate Mandela who disclosed the status of some of his family members in public. Also, the article *US ambassador exhorts Fon: Go for AIDS test* expressed the appeal by the US ambassador to traditional rulers of Cameroon to go for their HIV screening test and subsequently become conscious of their HIV status. According to this article, the US ambassador informs the public that “...*the first step to effective prevention is to know your status...*” Through news articles such as *Access card for free AIDS screening* and *Cost of test reduced to FCFA 500*, Cameroonians have been encouraged to go for their HIV/AIDS screening test. These articles contains information about the availability of certain free screening centers and also a reduction in the cost of testing in some hospitals. The information provided by these articles

has however encouraged those Cameroonians who were limited by finances from knowing their HIV status to now go for the HIV test.

The Cameroon Post newspaper has also been very instrumental in curbing the rate of AIDS mortality through information about the availability of HIV /AIDS treatment. The article "*Anti-retroviral drugs now cheaper and available*" clearly states the new reduced prices of AIDS drugs and also stipulates the location. According to this article which is an interview granted by the coordinator of Day hospital Bamenda, the coordinator states "...*the drugs are very effective if the patient is complaisance, that is you must take them regularly; don't miss doses as presented by your doctor. Every patient must get his or herself stocked, replenish all the time before you have the last tablet run out*". In the article *HIV/AIDS is treatable*, which is a report from a traditional doctors claim to treat AIDS, the traditional doctor claims on using traditional drugs which have been known for ages to strengthen the system and encourage body growth thereby encouraging patients to get relieved of opportunistic infections. The article "*Free treatment to 100 HIV/AIDS patients*" equally provides information on the availability of effective anti retroviral drugs. The information contained in these articles has however benefitted many Cameroonians who weren't aware of the availability of cheaper and affordable drugs as they subsequently became aware of where affordable treatment could be obtained thanks to such news articles by the Cameroon post newspaper.

The Cameroon Post newspaper has been providing a lot of encouragement to HIV/AIDS patients and victims by instilling hope in them. Many Cameroonians who felt like giving up the battle against AIDS have been encouraged as a result of promising information provided by the Cameroon Post newspaper. In the article "*Anti retroviral drugs are effective- Prof. Muffih Tih*", an interview granted by the director of health services of Cameroon Baptist Convention, Professor Pius Tih, declares that anti retroviral drugs are presently free of charge and very effective. To instill hope to HIV positive people, he narrated the case of a patient whose CD4 count rose from 79 to 1014 as a result of effective use of the anti retroviral therapy. In a similar manner, in the article *there is hope for HIV/AIDS patients-Dr.*



*Forchingong* which is an interview by Dr. Rose Forchingong, she says there is hope for HIV/AIDS positive people as a result of the availability of new anti retroviral drugs. According to her, although the anti retroviral does not cure, it gives patients help on how to live normal lives. These articles have however encouraged patients to stick to the anti retroviral drugs and use them effectively in order to avoid opportunist infections. Also hope of financial and material assistance is being given to poor people who are HIV positive. Through the articles *AIDS orphans, vulnerable children get assistance*, *“HIV carriers receive Christmas gifts”*, *“OSIWA provides funds to HIV/AIDS patients”* and *“NGO’s donate to HIV/AIDS orphans”*, news has been given about donations and both financial and material assistance from NGOs and other good hearted individuals to HIV positive people especially to the orphans. Many HIV positive people have been encouraged as they get convinced that they have not been abandoned and lots of people in the world care about them. Also some HIV positive people have developed more hope by believing that if material assistance could be given to other HIV positive people, it could one day be given to them thereby making their burden lighter. Thus the Cameroon Post newspaper has encouraged other HIV positive people by providing the public with information on donations in the form of food item and cash which have been made to HIV positive people and orphans. It can be suggested that thanks to the media (the Cameroon Post newspaper), the actions of individuals and donor non-governmental organizations towards people living with HIV /AIDS have been shown to the world, with the effects being that other organizations and philanthropists will follow suit to bring assistance necessary to the fight against HIV/AIDS and also help those living with the virus. The articles *Free treatment to 100 HIV/AIDS patients* and *“pharmaceutical companies cut AIDS drug price”* have also been very encouraging as many victims turn to think that the cost of HIV/AIDS treatment gets affordable to them as time goes by because the articles informs of the availability of cheaper and free anti retroviral drugs. Thus people will no longer worry about footing the bills of their medication. Other articles such as *Meet man who’s lived with HIV/AIDS for 26 years* has also encouraged a lot of Cameroonians who have been made to understand that it is possible to be HIV positive and still have a long and normal life span because the article clearly presents the case of a man who has been HIV positive for

26 years but yet healthy. Such encouragement has however been instrumental in reducing HIV/AIDS mortality rate in Cameroon.

### **ANTI STIGMATISATION OF HIV/AIDS**

There exist several definitions of stigma. According to UNAIDS *“stigma is a process of devaluation of people either living with or associated with HIV/AIDS. Discrimination follows stigma and is unfair and unjust treatment of an individual based on his or her real or perceived HIV status. Discrimination occurs when a distinction is made against a person that results in being treated unfairly on the basis of belonging to a particular group”*

Brimlow et al (2003) defines HIV-stigma as all unfavorable attitudes, beliefs and policies directed towards people perceived to have HIV as well as their significant others and loved ones, close associates, social group and communities. Patterns of prejudices, which includes devaluating, discounting, discrediting, and discriminating against these groups of people play into and strengthen existing social inequalities, especially those of gender, sexuality and race that are at the root of HIV-related stigma (Keulder, 2007: 4-6).

Many societies have attached a lot of stigma to HIV/AIDS thereby making conditions horrible for most HIV positive victims. A lot of people have been abandoned, isolated and mocked in Cameroon as a result of their HIV positive status. Thus stigmatization is a major challenge to HIV positive people as it results to a lot of trauma which more often than not creates a favorable atmosphere for an early grave by HIV positive people.

According to Goffman (1963), illnesses associated with stigma results to a spoilt identity that can set an individual apart from others. Stigma on HIV/AIDS however originated from a lot of misconceptions people had during the period when HIV/AIDS was first discovered. In some societies, it was considered a disease which came into existence as a result of homosexuality and thus affects only homosexuals. In other societies especially in Cameroon; it was considered a disease which serves as punishment to all immoral people especially prostitutes. Also, because HIV/AIDS is seen as progressive, incurable and

contagious there is bound to be stigma as many people prefer not to interact with HIV positive people for fear of contracting the virus.

According to Keulder (2007), there is both internal and external stigma. Internal stigma in his context refers to stigma that is felt or imagined based on shame, guilt and the fear of discrimination. Internal stigma is nevertheless very common in areas where it is believed that HIV/AIDS is punishment for sexually promiscuous people. Meanwhile external stigma to him refers to the actual experience of stigma implemented by the community. External stigma is manifested through open discrimination in the form of social rejection, exclusion from social networks, loss of employment as well as name calling (Keulder 2007).

Nowadays, although a lot of research has been done on HIV and facts given to the society that HIV/AIDS is no respecter of age, class, gender, marital status and sexual orientation there is still a lot of stigma attached to it especially in developing countries. There have been suggestions that this is the result of ignorance coupled with the fact that most people from developing countries are very conservative and reluctant to accept changes in mentality.

In Cameroon, contracting HIV/AIDS remains a taboo in some areas and it has been so serious that some patients are treated with discrimination which have taken varying forms and have hardly gone unnoticed. Stigma is however irrespective of gender as both men and women suffer from HIV/AIDS related stigma. The Cameroon Post newspaper has however also tried to fight against HIV/AIDS related stigma by responding to anti-stigmatization campaigns and enlightening people about HIV/AIDS so that people living with the disease should be treated as an integral part of the society. The Cameroon post newspaper has through articles such as *Dying with the stigma of AIDS* and *Briefs; PROMETRA Cameroon to reduce AIDS stigma* fought against HIV stigmatization. In the former article, a story of a young man who had been abandoned due to HIV is narrated, and the society has been called upon to cease from acts of discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS. The article also encourages support groups which advances for good and fair treatment of

people who are HIV positive. The later article which is actually a brief from the Association for the Promotion of Medicine, PROMETRA, provides information which promises to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma by giving advice on the prevention and care of infected persons. These articles nonetheless appeal to the general public to be able to pass on information and messages which reduces the misunderstanding and misconceptions surrounding the cause of the infectious disease thereby reducing the stigma associated with the virus.

The Cameroon Post newspaper has also generalized the issue of fighting against stigmatization by not addressing it to a particular gender because both men and women have either been victims or are related to people who have been stigmatized upon based on their HIV positive status.

## **PERSUASIVE AND DISUASIVE TECHNIQUES**

Persuasive and dissuasive techniques here refers to articles which have either persuaded women to adopt certain practices that leads to a reduction of HIV/AIDS transmission or those which have dissuaded or discouraged them from continuing with certain practices which makes them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infections.

The persuasive techniques however have been used especially in handling the theme of HIV/AIDS prevention. The Cameroon Post newspaper has persuaded women to practice safe sex in order to prevent themselves from contracting the deadly HIV/AIDS virus. To this effect, some of the news articles provided by the newspaper have persuaded women to use condoms. Some of the newspaper articles nevertheless contain information on how to use both the female and male condom as a means of preventing HIV/AIDS transmission. The articles *Condoms prevent pregnancies, spread of AIDS, Meme women urged to use condoms, Women delegate encourages promotion of female condoms,* and *SWAA-Cameroon graduates peer educators of female condoms* provides information and messages which have encouraged and persuaded women to practice safe sex through regular and careful use of condoms. Although women in Cameroon usually lacks the powers to negotiate safe, these articles

persuades even the married women to insist on using condoms on suspicions of infidelity or unfaithfulness from their husbands. To this effect, the chance of being contaminated by an unfaithful contaminated partner is reduced. Also the Cameroon post newspaper through its article *Abstinence, not condom is best defense for HIV/AIDS* has encouraged and persuaded married women to practice fidelity meanwhile the young and unmarried women should abstain from sexual activities. In the article, Dr. Vivien Khumba who heads the Health Care International Buea suggests that communication barrier that exists between parents and youths on sexual issues can be handled easily if families inculcate Christian values in their members. She however advocates for abstinence and persuades the youths to abstain from sex in order not to contract HIV/AIDS since according to her; condoms may instead increase the spread of the pandemic because of the inefficient modes of transportation and preservation in Cameroon.

Some articles of the Cameroon post newspaper have persuaded women to go for their HIV /AIDS screening test. Articles such as *“Rural women schooled on HIV/AIDS”* and *“Collaborating to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission”* persuades women especially the pregnant ones to go for their HIV /AIDS screening test. These articles have not also failed to stress on the need for the women to always use condoms. It can be suggested that knowledge about the need for pregnant women to get themselves tested for HIV/AIDS and the possibility of using condoms to avoid being contaminated by a contaminated partner have served as motivation which has influenced the women to adopt “safe behaviors” which reduces the possibilities of getting infected with the HIV/AIDS virus.

In terms of the dissuasive techniques, the Cameroon post newspaper has not in any articles out rightly dissuaded women from certain acts. It has rather dissuaded the general public with women inclusive to avoid certain acts in order to reduce the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus. Cross generational sex and child and human trafficking are the two items the Cameroon post newspaper has discouraged in its articles. The articles titled *Campaign against cross generational sex and Youths urged to shun sugar daddies, mummies* have dissuaded the general population from transactional or commercial sexual activities. These

articles reveal that sexual activities between young girls and old men account for about 10 percent of the HIV/AIDS prevalence in Cameroon. According to these articles, young women risk contracting HIV/AIDS because “sugar daddies” (a phrase commonly used in Cameroon to describe men chasing young girls for sex in exchange of money), who have the money determine how to have sex which is usually unprotected and can obviously result to HIV/AIDS transmission. Although the slogan of “No romance without finance” is highly practiced in Cameroon, both young and old people have been dissuaded from continuing with such acts as it increases the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. In the articles *child trafficking increases HIV/AIDS spread-CHRAPA Director* and *Stop human trafficking to prevent HIV/AIDS*, human trafficking is discouraged because it has also been identified as one of the reasons for the high prevalence of HIV /AIDS infection in Cameroon. According to both articles, some people trafficked are usually forced into commercial sexual activities which is of course considered a risky behavior since it exposes them a lot and thus increases their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

### **JOURNALISTIC FORMS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONVEYED**

According to David Deacon et al (1993), discourse analysis is generally concerned with extended samples of talk or text, with the structural, stylistic and rhetorical features of these samples, and with the form of dialogue or communicative interaction that occurs through talk and texts. Journalistic form here therefore refers to the style used by journalists to convey information in the newspaper. Journalistic forms may however include reportage, a press release, and even editorials or interviews.

The Cameroon Post newspaper has used a lot of interviews in tackling issues related to HIV/AIDS. The newspaper house has published a lot of interviews with medical practitioners and other high ranking officials who have expressed their points of views about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The articles *HIV/AIDS doest kill, AIDS does –Dr.Khumbah*, *HIV/AIDS is a disease of the youth –Dr. Fochingong*, *Anti-retroviral are effective ;Prof*

*Muffih Tih, HIV/AIDS hastens tuberculosis infection – Rural women coordinator, HIV is a natural virus not fabricated -Prof. Anoma Ngu and VANHIVAX Has cured AIDS patients – Prof Anoma Ngu, are some of the interviews and excerpts from interviews the Cameroon post newspaper has used in some of its editions in presenting HIV/AIDS related information.*

Also, a lot of reportage has been used by the Cameroon Post newspaper to present HIV/AIDS related information or news. Events have been covered by the Cameroon Post newspaper workers and other correspondents who have been able to provide its readers with a lot of information which increases awareness and information about HIV/AIDS and subsequently helps in its fight. Some of the articles directly addressing women are reportage. Examples of such articles include *900 women to attend Limbe AIDS conference, Women delegate encourages promotion of female condoms, Peer educators target girls on HIV/AIDS, SWAA Cameroon Graduates peer educators on female condoms, Meme women urged to use condoms, Rural women schooled on HIV/AIDS, Women to prevent new HIV/AIDS infections and World AIDS day: Pregnant women still lack access to hospital, Meanwhile most of the other news articles are equally reportage. Some of them include Material donated to fight HIV/AIDS donated to Universities, SUN AIDS develops telephone facility to fight HIV/AIDS, Cameroon mayor mobilize against HIV/AIDS, Center for disease control to boost HIV/AIDS prevention, Access cards for free AIDS screening, OSIWA provides funds for HIV/AIDS patients, US officials exhorts ministers to go for public HIV test, US ambassador exhorts Fons: Go for AIDS test and cost of test reduced to 500 amongst others.*

The Cameroon Post newspaper has also used a system of creative, informative and intelligence writing in presenting certain news articles that provides vital information on certain facts about HIV/AIDS. Some of such articles equally contain information that can also serve as a tool in the process of fighting against HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. These articles are therefore neither interviews, press releases nor reportage. Examples of such articles include *HIV and Cameroon in retrospect and HIV/AIDS, still a permanent challenge.*

The tone of presenting news stories cannot be left out when dealing with journalistic form. This is so because the manner in which journalists project a particular idea has a lot of influence on the way the information will be digested by its audience. Most of the news articles about HIV/AIDS prevention by the Cameroon Post newspaper depict the slogan which says “*prevention is better than cure*”. Thus in an attempt to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS pandemic in Cameroon, the Cameroon post newspaper has repeatedly laid emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention by informative and educative information as well as by encouraging and stressing on the need to practice condom use throughout most of its published editions. Articles such as *Meme women urged to use condoms*, *Condoms prevent pregnancies, spread of AIDS*, and *women delegate encourages promotion of female condom*, have stressed a lot on the need to practice safe sex by using condoms effectively so as to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. Repeating the same information by the newspaper and branding it under separate articles depicts a tone of seriousness. Also, the tone used in some of the articles which encourages HIV/AIDS victims to follow up their treatment effectively depicts the fact that there could be hope for HIV/AIDS victims. An example of such an article is *Anti retroviral are effective –Prof Muffin*. The article sounds rather certain and thus HIV/AIDS positive people have been encouraged to take their medication properly in order to live life healthily.

There exist a very strong relationship between journalistic forms and the sources of information that has been conveyed in journalistic writings. This is so because news credibility is also influenced by the source. Most often than not, authors opinions are usually based on emotions and anecdotal evidence and sometimes they are based on personal experience which may sometimes lead to biases in presenting new articles. On the contrary, attributing sources to news articles increases credibility and believability by readers. Good sources allows for believability while opinions results to ambiguity and doubts in the minds of readers.

The 5Ws and H are important factors to consider when dealing with issues of sourcing and credibility of news stories. The questions of; *who, what, where, which, when* and



*how*, if well answered by the audience after reading a news article immediately determines the level of credibility of the story. For instance, many audiences will find it more credible if a health practitioner or a medical doctor grants an interview on HIV/AIDS prevention techniques on World AIDS Day, than if a banker did. The Cameroon post newspaper has however been credited for attributing sources to most of its HIV/AIDS related articles which have been published. It can be suggested that the reason for attributing sources to their news article is to increase credibility thereby making their newspaper more reliable to majority of its audiences. Even in its reportage sources are attributed where they are due. In many of the articles, medical doctors, health practitioners such as health delegates, UN official, US ambassador have been attributed as sources in the news articles. This only goes to increase credibility in the minds of the readers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE; NEWSPAPER ACTIVITIES VERSUS REALITY IN CAMEROON**

The Cameron Post newspaper can be argued to have contributed to the development of diverse aspects and fields in Cameroon. Although it has contributed to development especially in providing information which is effective and vital in the reduction of HIV/AIDS prevalence in Cameroon, the realities which exist in Cameroon has prevented the newspaper from achieving most of its intended objectives effectively.

### **FACTORS HINDERING EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES OF THE CAMEROON POST**

First and foremost, the Cameroon Post newspaper operates mostly in the towns and cities of Cameroon, thereby ignoring most of the rural and interior areas. According to Ngwainmbi (1995), the Cameroon media is so distanced from the rural persons to an extent that, they find it difficult to actually understand the needs of the people in the interior except for group participation. Thus in terms of providing information which is suitable for the reduction of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon, those in the rural and interior villages are more often than not neglected. However, the fact that the Cameroon post newspaper is privately owned and equally a business that warrants profits explains why its publications are mostly sold in the urban areas. Most people in villages and remote areas of Cameroon are poor and unable to afford the newspapers as opposed to city and large town dwellers.

The rate of illiteracy is also very high in most of the remote areas of Cameroon. According to Ngwainmbi (1995), many people in the interiors of Cameroon are unable to read and write and hence cannot understand and digest the information presented by the Cameroon post newspaper. Also, the inefficient transport facilities which exists in Cameroon, coupled with the difficulty in terrain in some remote areas also explains why the activities of the Cameroon Post newspaper are mostly limited to the large towns and cities of Cameroon. The fact that most of the interior areas are neglected is a strong indication that the newspaper

house has not been so successful in its objectives aside profit making because the rural areas constitute a greater proportion of the total population of Cameroon. The rhetorical question therefore goes thus; how can the Cameroon post newspaper possibly effectively achieve its goal of fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon when the rural areas that constitute about 75 percent of the total population are almost neglected? It is worth noting here that the rate of HIV/AIDS is increasing drastically in the remote areas of Cameroon (IRIN NEWS 2007). Indications are high level of illiteracy and ignorant by most rural dwellers, poverty which leads to a lot of transactional sexual activities in rural areas and even the existence of some hostile African cultures such as polygamy and the practice of inheriting a late brother's widow. All these factors contribute to a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the remote and rural areas dwellers of Cameroon.

The lack of absolute or total press freedom in Cameroon has also worked against the Cameroon post newspaper in its ability to achieve its objectives. When tracing the history of the evolution of the Cameroon press, it is seen that a lot of journalists have been arrested and detained for going against government expectations (Eribo & Tanjong 2002). According to reports without borders (RWB), it is still dangerous for journalists to report on subjects that are considered sensitive by the government. Also, according to IRIN NEWS (2007), journalists can be arrested and imprisoned for libel and there have been incidents of attacks on journalists including the beating of a female radio personality and the detention of an editor by the military. The Cameroon government nonetheless expects the media to be its watch dog rather than being critical and objective about government activities. In as much as the Cameroon post newspaper is expected to be more critical and objective than the government owned newspapers in Cameroon, it is still not strange or surprising that it may have been biased or skeptical in providing information or certain facts about HIV/AIDS in Cameroon in a bid to avoid troubles and the possibilities of a ban and detention of journalists by the ruling government. Thus it can be argued that the absence of absolute freedom of press in Cameroon has equally negatively affected and hindered the Cameroon post newspaper from effectively

targeting and exposing every detail about HIV/AIDS in Cameroon because the government might have its hidden agenda or benefits in the whole HIV/AIDS drama in Cameroon.

The high prevalence of corruption in Cameroon has also limited the Cameroon post newspaper from achieving its goals efficiently. Corruption in Cameroon has greatly affected the mass media thereby leading to the practice of “Gombo” journalism in Cameroon. According to Eribo & Tanjong (2002), “gombo” journalism is a metaphor, mostly used in Cameroon for various forms of kickbacks, freebies and rewards solicited by journalists and provided by various news actors to journalists. In clear essence, the sort of journalism where the journalists are paid or given gifts in exchange of a biased presentation of news items or information does exist in Cameroon on a large scale. Many journalists in Cameroon have been paid to avoid fairness and objectivity when presenting news stories. It can therefore be argued that not all the information provided by the Cameroon post newspaper with respect to HIV/AIDS is necessarily true and worth trusting. The high level of corruption in Cameroon has thus hindered the mass media from efficiently achieving its intended goals.

Limited financial resources have also been a great impediment to the proper running of the mass media in Cameroon. Many activities of the Cameroon post newspaper have not been so effective due to limitations in terms of finance. The Cameroon post for instance has been ignorant about some of the happenings in rural and interior areas because of their inability to employ qualified correspondents in such areas. The newspaper house also lacks the financial resources to always travel to the far interior and village areas to actually investigate and understand the needs of their people. Information for most of their articles about rural areas is usually obtained from secondary sources whose reliability and credibility is most often than not questionable. Limitations in finances manifested through the inability of the newspaper house to obtain news items from professional journalists sent to cover or investigate events in the interior and remote areas have affected its credibility in the eyes of some members of the audience. This has nevertheless also affected the struggle against HIV/AIDS in Cameroon because some of the readers of the newspaper do not trust the

information provided on grounds of incredibility and hence they cannot practice what they do not trust and believe in.

## **CHAPTER SIX; RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

First and foremost, the Cameroon post newspaper should embark more on investigative journalism in order to better understand the HIV/AIDS situation of Cameroon in general. Most of its articles about HIV/AIDS are based on events such as seminars and conferences. The Cameroon Post newspaper can be said to have been reluctant in penetrating into the society to investigate on HIV /AIDS. Rather, the newspaper house makes reports based on information that sometimes come from top government officials who are sometimes very corrupt and thus reveal only information that is beneficial to the government. Thus the practice of investigative journalism by the Cameroon post newspaper will help them understand the masses more and give them an insight as to the reasons for the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon so as to know the exact strategies that can be used in curbing HIV/AIDS rather than depending on information given to them by the “so called specialists”.

In a similar manner, the Cameroon post newspaper should initiate and create its own independent column in the newspaper that aims at eradicating HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. To this effect reporting on HIV/AIDS related issues will no longer depend on the amount of seminars and conferences held, or on the availability of specialist to grant interviews. But rather the independent column on HIV/AIDS will serve as a regular tool through which various aspects of HIV/AIDS are investigated. Such a column will constantly inform the public on the latest development about HIV/AIDS and the behavioral changes needed to develop a strong and giant resistance against HIV/AIDS.

Also, after reading through all the HIV/AIDS related articles of the Cameroon post newspaper, it is realized that a lot of attention has been paid to addressing women on HIV/AIDS while ignoring the men. Thus the Cameroon post newspaper should also write its news items to empharicise that men equally have an important role to play in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Cameroon despite the fact that women are more infected. Due to the presence

of gender inequality in Cameroon where women lack the ability to negotiate safe sex, men should also be educated on the need for responsible behaviors so as to reduce the chances of acquiring HIV/AIDS and subsequently contaminating their wife or wives. Only two of the HIV/AIDS articles out rightly educate men on the need to adopt prudent behavior that reduces the risk of getting infected with HIV/AIDS and subsequently contaminating others especially the women. Given that majority of HIV/AIDS cases are transmitted through heterosexual relationships, it will be almost pointless to keep cautioning the women to adopt behavioral changes because those changes do not depend on women alone as men have equally gotten to be responsible and to have genuine respect for women and their values in order for the deadly disease to be eradicated.

The Cameroon post newspaper should also focus to strive for the need of gender equality in Cameroon. In as much as they advocate for HIV/AIDS to be prevented through condom use, they should educate the entire population that gender inequality has also contributed to the widespread of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. The newspaper house should thus provide information that educates women on their rights especially their sexual rights. The newspaper should also pay emphasis on educating women to be resourceful and gain financial independence rather than relying on men who usually exploit them sexually in exchange of material tokens. This is so because the existence of gender equality in Cameroon will reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS infections especially if women are conferred the rights to believe in themselves not as tools to be used by men to satisfy their sexual desires.

Journalists of the Cameroon post newspaper should strive as much as possible to remain true to their professional ethics and vows. They should always aim for fairness and objectivity when tackling news items. Thus they should cease from practicing “gombo” journalism. They should not accept gifts or money in order to present a one sided story or deliberately leaves out certain information when presenting news. Such a practice of professionalism will only go a long way in better handling its activities with HIV/AIDS inclusive.

Finally, the Cameroon post newspaper management should improve on its finances and equally allocate some budget to employ and station correspondent journalists in the interior and remote areas. This is suggested because HIV/AIDS prevalence is highest in the remote areas of Cameroon. Thus efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in Cameroon will pass for nothing if the interior and remote areas are neglected. Funds should also be allocated to serve as travel allowance or out of station allowance so that some of the professional journalists could travel from time to time to the remote areas in order to best understand the situation and subsequently come out with logical solutions to the problem of HIV/AIDS.

## **CONCLUSION**

The mass media of Cameroon has generally contributed positively towards the eradication of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. Although with certain flaws, the Cameroon post newspaper has provided instrumental information and certain facts which have gone a long way to stimulating behavioral changes that results to the reduction of HIV/AIDS both in the women and the general population of Cameroon.

The media has played a constructive role towards HIV/AIDS reduction by creating awareness and sensitizing the public to adopt the changes that will help curb the spread of HIV/AIDS but it cannot solely influence behavioral changes as a lot of factor account for why people in Cameroon behave the way they do. This is so because as much as HIV/AIDS is a behavioral problem, it is equally a developmental problem. Gender inequality for instance is a characteristic of most developing countries that has tremendously contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. Many women in Cameroon consider men to be superior to them. According to IRIN NEWS (2007), many parents prefer educating the boy child rather than the girl child in a situation where they lack funds to educate both children. Thus meanwhile the boy child goes to school; the girl child is being prepared for marriage. Many illiterate girls in Cameroon are therefore convinced that their position in the society is to carter for their home



and satisfy their husband sexually. Husbands and boyfriends therefore dictate when and how to have sex. They dictate whether or not the sex should be protected or unprotected. Hence, many girls end up being victims of HIV/AIDS due to gender inequality in Cameroon which places the woman at a disadvantaged position.

Many people in Cameroon generally get involved in behaviors which exposes them to HIV/AIDS as a result of poverty. Poverty is also a very strong factor which accounts for the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon and most developing countries. Due to poverty, many young girls and women indulge in prostitution and transactional sexual activities which only exposes them more to HIV/AIDS and thus increases the prevalence of women in Cameroon. Also, due to underdevelopment and poverty, some people have acquired HIV/AIDS through inefficient medical equipment in the hospitals. The effects of HIV/AIDS are equally very devastating in Cameroon as a result of poverty because many HIV positive people lack the funds needed to live a healthy and stress free life.

Several interventions are therefore needed in order to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS amongst the women in Cameroon aside the media. Both the government and non-governmental organizations should cooperate to adjust other aspects and domains of the country. Laws should be passed to grant women in Cameroon more freedom and rights especially reproductive and sexual rights. The laws that legalize polygamy in Cameroon should be changed because polygamous relationships have also increased the prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the women in Cameroon. The Cameroon government in collaboration with other nongovernmental organizations coupled with the Cameroon media should enact gender equality in Cameroon so that the myths that positions women in an inferior position should be abolished. The problem of poverty should also be looked at. Jobs should be created so that youths can get employed rather than idling and indulging into activities that will only expose them more to HIV/AIDS. It will for instance make no sense to tell a young girl who is dying of starvation not to have sex in exchange of money because the girl will probably be short sighted and will think of her immediate hardships rather than thinking of the consequences of HIV/AIDS which will be felt many years later.

The effects of the media in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Cameroon will be greatly achieved only if the problem of gender inequality and poverty are looked upon and solutions provided. Thus it is imperative for the media in Cameroon to work hand in hand with the government and other nongovernmental organizations to make adjustments in various aspects of the country so as to effectively reduce the rate of the spread of the deadly HIV/AIDS virus.

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