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**BALANCING THE STATE/BUILDING A NATION:
AN ASSESSMENT OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews and assesses the climate and possibilities for an A.I.D. program to promote democratic governance (D/G) in Cameroon. The underlying notion of D/G is that of broadly shared responsibility in the management of public affairs. It implies that there is relative balance among state institutions and between them and civil society; and that an absence of such balance is likely to lead to non-democratic practices and the lack of "good governance." In this regard, three sets of relationships are analyzed in order to determine the extent of balance or equilibrium that exists between and/or among Cameroonian institutions of the state and civil society. This assessment thus looks at the following sets of relationships: 1) among the state institutions of the Executive, National Assembly and Judiciary; 2) between central government and local government; and 3) between state institutions and civil society. The following is a brief summary of the principal findings and conclusions related to this analysis.

1. Cameroon's Constitution: An Imbalance in State Relationships

Cameroon's Constitution provides for, and in fact, the history of the country is an extended lesson in, the acquisition of power on behalf of a strong executive branch, specifically, the Presidency. The 197 Constitution defined and enshrined a set of relationships between the Executive and the other two branches of government which created a structural imbalance in both the exercise of power and separation of responsibilities. Under the Constitution the President has the right to dissolve the Assembly, and call new elections at any time; to return bills for a "second reading," requiring that they be passed by a majority of the full Assembly; and to govern by decree when the Assembly is not in session. Even under the current multi-party political system, which included legislative elections in 1992, the ruling party and its coalition partner, have been able to set the legislative agenda, preventing most opposition initiatives from coming to a vote. In effect, there has been no change in Executive - Legislative relations from the 30 previous years of one party rule to that under the "new" multi-party system. While the National Assembly is at least a separate branch of government, the Cameroonian court system is part of the Executive branch and thus not even an independent branch of government. The entire court system is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice, thus, making all magistrates in Cameroon little more than civil servants responsible to the Minister of Justice, and ultimately to the President and his party. As the Supreme Courts ruling on alleged "irregularities" in the recent Presidential elections makes clear, cases with a decidedly political dimension have little likelihood of a fair hearing.

One of the objectives of this assessment was "to determine and recommend for USAID consideration, the possibilities and opportunities for governmental transparency, accountability and integrity." The fact is, that until there is a true separation of powers within the institutions of the state, and the executive branch's power is brought into parity with those of the National Assembly in particular, there can be little increase in any of the attributes associated with good governance. The issue is a structural one, and nothing short of Constitutional reform will right the imbalance that has characterized state relations since independence. A Constitutional

Commission formed as a result of the "Tripartite Conference" held in 1991, has not met in nearly one year.

2. Central vs Local Government: Development Participation and Local Governance

Cameroon's system of public administration reflects the same pattern in the centralization of power in state and local government relations, as within those of the state itself. While the "Commune" is supposed to be the focus of development and self-governance at the local level, current policy as embodied in local government law provides very few areas of meaningful decision making, nor much control over the collection and/or retention of revenue for use in the discharge of local government responsibilities. Where central government has encouraged a significant degree of decentralization and self-governance at the local level, is in the area of public service delivery. As central government has disengaged itself from the provision public services as a result of Cameroon's economic crisis, local communities and the private sector in general, have been permitted to increase their participation in decisions related to the financing and management of such services as health care and primary education.

Communal and municipal administrators have been locally elected for sometime in Cameroon but no elections have taken place since the establishment of the multi-party political system in 1991. Local government elections scheduled for 1991 were postponed by President Biya, and according to law must be held before the end of April 1993. There is a decreasing likelihood of this taking place as currently scheduled due to problems encountered in reopening the voter registration roles. As evidenced during the October 1992 Presidential elections, voter registration and tampering with voter roles was considered a significant irregularity, thus, making it a potentially disruptive issue during Municipal elections.

The only way that the current disequilibrium in central - local government relations will come about is if a new decentralization policy is formulated and a corresponding local government law is passed which increases the rights of communal and municipal government vis-a-vis central government. As long as the legislative agenda is controlled by the Executive branch as discussed above, it could be some time before meaningful reform is seen. The only area where true self-governance activities are taking place is within that of public service delivery with central government Ministries actually devolving decision making responsibility and authority to local communities. As local involvement in both the management and financing of public services is viewed as "development" participation rather than "political" participation, there is every likelihood that such involvement will increase with or without an economic upturn.

Viewing D/G as a "cross-cutting" strategy in which corresponding interventions (e.g. promoting a policy of public sector decentralization and increasing local organizational management effectiveness, accountability and transparency) are built into the Mission's sectoral programs, offers, at this point in Cameroonian political development, a realistic means for advancing the principles and practices of democratic governance. This assessment gives particular importance to popular participation, decentralization and local organizations in building self-governance capacity at the grassroots level. These underlying principles of the Development Fund for

Africa, which have guided and been a mainstay of A.I.D.'s rural development strategy and practice for several decades, need to be reintroduced into the emerging field of democracy and governance. As a first step then in the design process, this assessment makes that recommendation. In the case of Cameroon, there is a far greater likelihood that the integration of D/G values, principles and practices into such areas as primary health care, community-managed forestry projects, cooperative and credit union development, to name a few, could have as great an impact as a stand-alone D/G activity aimed at changing behavior, if not attitudes, among state institutions, or even those of the civil society.

3. State - Civil Society Relations

Civil society in Cameroon has a number of dimensions and incorporates an enormous range of diversity. A particular dimension that deserves attention is the dichotomy of informal/traditional and formal/modern institutions in civil society. While the latter set of organizations, normally associated with NGOs, is relatively weak in Cameroon, associational life as embodied by traditional associations, is as rich and varied as any where in Africa. These local associations, mainly affiliated around ethnic groups, serve as one of the principal mechanisms for the transmission of information and the advancement of education between groups and from generation to generation. They also have an economic dimension, and are often associated with the informal sector financial institution known as "tontines." The best way to understand these groups is to view them as "mutual aid" societies that provide social comfort and economic assistance in good times and bad. The importance of these traditional, grassroots and informal societies have become even more important in today's Cameroon with the tremendous dislocations caused by the country's economic crisis. Working through these traditional societies and associations, new ideas can be introduced and people can be mobilized to articulate their aspirations and needs, as well as, express and implement their collective will. Reaching them has been, however, problematic but is an area in which the more formalized NGOs can increasingly become involved. While their technical and management capacity is often limited, their knowledge of and linkages with these groups is extensive, and their intentions, for the most part, are unquestioned. If civil society is to fulfill its role as a countervailing force to the state, education must take place at the level where people learn best, i.e., in the context of their daily lives and within the institutions with which they are most familiar.

A number of conclusions result from this analysis of civil society institutions. NGOs as intermediaries between the modern, formal world and the traditional, informal one, are an appropriate means for reaching these local organizations and working with them to build citizenship and a pluralistic society. In order to play such a role however, NGOs will themselves need to be strengthened, both in this intermediary capacity, and as "independent agents" of civil society that advocate policies that are favorable to their members or clients vis-a-vis government institutions. The immediate focus of such institutional development interventions would be those NGOs with the largest networks linking them to the local grassroots level. Secondly, additional consideration, including further study, should be given to exploring ways to strengthen the informal private sector given its relative strength and vibrancy vis-a-vis those enterprises comprising the formal sector. As pointed out in the body of this assessment, the

potential that the independent media could play in the strengthening of civil society, and thus in promoting greater balance with the state, is simply not being realized; although conditions certainly exist for it to do so. The final conclusion of this section, is that the potential for strengthening Cameroonian civil society to act as an equal partner under a system of democratic governance is attainable under the current political climate and feasible from a programmatic perspective. The state has lost its ability to manage civil society in Cameroon. The arbitrary and contradictory actions which are being witnessed today are those of an increasingly impotent, although not powerless, government. Increasingly, inertia and inaction have become substitutes for policy formulation and implementation. Random violence seems to have replaced organized repression, although this is hardly comforting to those who are its object. There is an impression that the cost to the state in trying to reestablish its monopoly of power in societal relations is probably greater than it, or the institutions of civil society, are willing to bear and tolerate. In such a situation, incremental and targeted interventions can hopefully move the process of democratization along in a relatively non-confrontational manner.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Scope of Work and Methodology

The following objectives (see attached Annex 1, Scope of Work) were the focus of this assessment:

- To assess the general climate and possibilities for an A.I.D. program to promote participatory governance in Cameroon;
- To identify the availability, qualification and suitability of Cameroonian NGOs, foundations and other private organizations active in promoting better government at the local and national levels;
- To review and assess the opportunities for A.I.D. assistance to the legislative branch in Cameroon;
- To propose for USAID consideration, the possibilities and opportunities for promoting governmental transparency, accountability and integrity; and
- To determine and recommend a suitable timetable for A.I.D. to develop a Democracy/ Governance program in Cameroon.

In relation to the second objective, consideration was given to the suitability of relevant members of the Cameroonian NGO community to participate in a "PVO co-financing program," an A.I.D. mechanism used to promote NGO involvement in various development areas consistent with its interests in a given country program. As concerns this assessment, that area of interest is the promotion of democratic governance in Cameroon.

This consultation has taken place over a period of 22 days (January 7 - 31, 1993), including two days preparation time in Washington D.C., three full work weeks in Cameroon, and two days travel time. The methodology employed in the conduct of this assessment was 1) a review of relevant documentation provided by A.I.D. in Cameroon and in Washington D.C., and 2) numerous interviews with concerned actors in Cameroonian political, economic and social life. As this was an exercise designed to gauge and assess the climate for democratic participation in Cameroon as well as the capacity of potential participating institutions, i.e., NGOs and the National Assembly, the emphasis was placed on talking to and discussing with the largest number and broadest range of informants as possible. Towards that end, a total of 72 informants from some 55 different organizations were interviewed in Cameroon, both Yaounde and Douala, and Washington D.C. (see attached Annex 2, Schedule of Meetings). Informants included representatives from five of the principal parties (i.e., with seats in the National Assembly); the donor community, multi-lateral and bi-lateral; international NGOs including volunteer organizations; a wide range of Cameroonian NGOs including church groups, peasant federations, women's groups, labor unions, development agencies, etc.; members of government, the national assembly, and several parastatals; and the University of Yaounde. Annex 3, contains a list of documents referred to during this assignment.

B. Program Context and Conceptual Framework

Within the Mission's emerging CPSP, democracy and governance (D/G) is seen as a critical element contributing to the achievement of the overall program goal: sustainable, broad-based, market-oriented growth, as well as each of the defined strategic objectives. In its "cross-cutting" dimension, principles of D/G will guide individual project design efforts with component interventions crafted accordingly. As a "target of opportunity," a stand-alone D/G project is envisaged which is intended to improve both the political and economic context within which CPSP programs will operate. In both cases, democracy and governance will be seen as intrinsic elements of the USAID/Cameroon program.

This assessment is undertaken within the general conceptual framework developed under the Africa Bureau's Democracy and Governance Program.¹ The fundamental issue addressed by the D/G Program is the relationship between sustainable, long-term economic development, the purpose of DFA legislation, and a political environment symbolized by democratic values and practices of "good governance," the concept referred to as "democratic governance." The following two sections briefly discuss this relationship and the concept of democratic governance, as this analysis including recommendations are to a significant extent derived from an application of this framework.

1. Democratic Governance: Shared Management and Decision-Making

The underlying notion of democratic governance (D/G) is that of broadly shared responsibility for decision-making in the management of public affairs. It implies that there is relative balance between state actors and "Civil Society"² in matters of governance. Pluralistic systems which encourage and depend on citizen participation in the political realm, whether through their democratically-elected representatives, or their institutions in civil society, have the effect of broadening the base of participation by including the voice of the governed in political, economic and social affairs. There is, thus, a far greater likelihood that outcomes favorable to these groups will result from this broadened decision-making process than through one which is primarily restricted to state-affiliated institutions. Democratic governance is a particular style of governing which combines competence and transparency in public management, predictability in the application of rules, the legitimacy of power-holders, as well as their accountability and

¹ See, "The Concepts of Governance and its Implications for A.I.D.'s Development Assistance Program in Africa," Prepared for the A.I.D. Africa Bureau under the Africa Bureau Democracy and Governance Program, Dr. Robert Charlick, Senior Governance Expert, Associates in Rural Development, June 1992.

² In this assessment, civil society refers to the full range of actors, both individuals and their democratically-organized institutions, which contribute to democratic governance from without, not within, the institutions of government. Civil society in the affirmative, as distinguished from "non-state actors," can be considered to include institutions of the independent media, for-profit private sector and the Church; the range of informal and traditional (mutual aid) societies based on a particular group affiliation (e.g. tribal, occupational or gender); and the generic category commonly referred to as non-governmental organizations.

responsiveness to the governed (governance) with the promotion of broad participation in the policy process, with electoral choice, and with respect for human rights (democratization).

A final aspect related to D/G is that governance functions and process can take place at any level of society, and that "public governance" is not simply restricted to state actors. Institutions of civil society (non-state publics) undertake governance functions once they become engaged in the management of resources and the production of benefits for their members. Thus, in addition to participation in decision-making which affects state governance, non-state publics are expected to exhibit and practice principles of democratic governance in their own institutions. This concept is particularly important in the development of strategies that incorporate democracy and governance principles in the Mission's "cross cutting" or sectoral programs and projects, and will be discussed in further detail later in this assessment.

2. The Enabling Environment: The Politics of Economic Growth

The last thirty years or so of African development efforts and donor assistance have led to the inescapable conclusion that economic growth, especially that which is broad-based and sustainable, has not fared well under authoritarian political regimes exercising, inter-alia, a high degree of intervention in economic life. While there is little empirical evidence to support this view, there is still good reason to believe that equitable and sustainable economic growth is far more likely to occur in an "enabling environment" which promotes a free market system within a pluralistic framework and linked to a tradition of effective and accountable government. At a minimum, there is little doubt that democracy as a political system is a far more "ennobling environment" for personal, as well as national development, than its opposite. In short, democracy has become a valued good in its own right. It is however, the convergence of democratic values with principles of good governance that creates the conditions for an enabling environment promoting economic growth. A stable democratic system based on the rule of law, capable of adjudicating in a fair and transparent manner between competing economic interests, in which the governed and governors have agreed upon the terms and conditions of their relationship (social contract), is a necessary condition for long-term, sustainable economic development. Nor does this formulation run in only one direction. Without economic growth it is hardly likely that favorable conditions will exist to sustain a policy of political liberalization once begun. This is perhaps one of the harshest lessons learned by African countries over the past decade that have embarked on the courageous path of democratization. It is a lesson with similar applicability to Cameroon, and concrete economic interventions can and should be incorporated into this and any D/G design effort. In short, as political and economic liberalization are mutually interdependent, so should be the types of assistance which are provided to support this process.

The remainder of this report is broken down into 1) a background section providing the context and setting for this assessment, 2) a sectoral assessment of D/G in Cameroon including findings and conclusions, 3) recommendations including a prioritized set of opportunities and strategies conforming to the set of objectives detailed in the SOW, and 4) a timetable and related issues for project development.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. The Essential Imbalance: A History of State Building

In February 1961 a United Nations plebiscite in the British Cameroons led to a decision by the southern portion to federate with the Republic of Cameroon (formerly French Cameroon). On October 1, 1961, the officially bi-lingual, Federal Republic of Cameroon came into being under the presidency of Ahmadou Ahidjo, a northerner who rose through the leadership ranks under French colonial rule. For the next 11 years under Ahidjo, a regime of repression and co-optation first centralized power in the hands of the presidency; then absorbed and suppressed other political parties effectively leaving Ahidjo's party (Union Nationale Camerounaise) as the new federation's *de facto* single party; and finally, in 1972, through a national referendum approved a new constitution that converted the federation to a unitary state and renamed country, the United Cameroon Republic. While Paul Biya's accession to power in 1982 was initially peaceful, the next four years were devoted to consolidating his power base and included 1) an unopposed presidential election victory in 1984, 2) National Assembly approval of a constitutional amendment to abolish the post of prime minister, 3) successfully putting down a military coup launched by Ahidjo supporters and leading to purges of both the military and political apparatus of northerners, and 4) a rejection of a return to multiparty politics. In short, in a space of 24 years, dating from Cameroonian independence to Biya's unquestioned consolidation of power, these two leaders had combined to abolish federalism and multiparty politics, establish a monolithic state, and create and perpetuate the historic cleavages which define today's Cameroon and the fundamental problem that must be addressed in any D/G activity.

One of the underlying themes of this assessment is the historical dominance of the state in both the political and economic affairs of Cameroon, and the ensuing imbalance in state - society relations. Both under its several colonial rulers, and from the first days of independence, building up the capacity of institutions under the control of the state for the purpose of directing and managing public life, was the aim of those holding the reins of power. This pattern of dominance was (un)wittingly supported by Cameroon's foreign friends and donors as a part of development assistance programs spanning the thirty plus years of the country's independence. The ultimate effect of state dominance was a correspondingly low level of civil society, including private sector involvement in public sector management and decision-making. This is the background to the current dynamic between the state and the array of non-state actors in the search for a new relationship, or social contract, that is more equal and inclusive ... that aims at nation building not simply state building.

B. Ethnicity: Its Multi-Dimensional Character and Impact on Nation Building

As any Cameroonian will willingly confirm, any analysis of their country, in any of its dimensions, must necessarily start and will most likely finish, with a discussion of ethnicity, more commonly referred to as tribalism. Trying to make sense of Cameroon can be frustrating and simultaneously straight forward. Geographically and culturally it sits at the juncture of West

and Central Africa, and its history is in many ways a modern day mirror of the "scramble for Africa" and the legacies of the colonial powers that ruled it from the late 18th to mid 20th centuries. The principal characteristics that remain and are identified with the colonial period are:

- ▶ **Linguistic** - French and English are both official languages, making Cameroon one of only two such bi-lingual countries in the world, the other being Canada. Anglophone Cameroon is primarily identified with the Northwest and Southwest Provinces but significant numbers of people in Yaounde and Douala speak English. French is spoken in the of rest of the country.
- ▶ **Religious³** - Christianity, Catholicism in the south, center and east; and Protestantism in the Southwest, Northwest and West. The "Greater North," i.e., the North, Far North and Adamoua Provinces are predominately Muslim and Islamic which resulted from Arab expansion emanating from Sahelian countries to the north and east.
- ▶ **Educational** - Cameroon's achievements in education are among the most notable in Africa. Initially a function of missionary activities and later formalized in church-run schools, successive Cameroonian governments have consistently devoted significant portions of the national budget to education. Parent's associations play a strong role in the Greater West and to a lesser degree in the South; the Greater North is the least advanced in terms of both literacy and percent of primary school enrollees.
- ▶ **Administrative** - Both the Northwest and Southwest Provinces were administered under the traditional British system of indirect rule and were thus used to a relatively high degree of self-government. This is in strong contrast to the highly centralized and direct rule practiced by the French in the "Greater South," i.e., South, Central, East and Littoral Provinces.

It should be kept in mind that these legacies were overlaid on indigenous cultures with their own traditions and values which were either reinforced by those of their colonial rulers, or rejected altogether. It has been pointed out for instance, that the British system of administration was politically and socially in-tune with the strong traditions of discipline and self-rule of the Bamilekes and other tribal groups in the northwest and southwest. Likewise the muslims in the North were accorded a far greater degree of autonomy by the French than in the South and reflects the strong influences of Islamic organization including the institution of slavery.

Depending on the respondent, there were deemed to be 200 to 300 different ethnic groups in Cameroon with as many different languages and dialects. Culturally and linguistically however, three distinct groupings have evolved since colonial days and can be identified with three distinct

³ Although animism is practiced by over 40% of Cameroon's population, it was not seen as a cleavage as such. In fact, as a dimension of social, cultural and spiritual life, the practice of animism probably does more to bring people together than it does to divide them.

geographic-climatic regions: 1) the Fulani or Peul and their former slaves in the Greater North and part of the Sahel, 2) the Bamileke and their cousins in the tropical Northwest-West-Southwest Axis or "Greater West," are also closely related to ethnic groups just over the border in Nigeria, and 3) the Beti and other "forest people" of the Greater South. While this paradigm is somewhat simplistic and masks significant variation within regions, combined with demonstrable patterns in the economic lives of these groups, it is sufficiently accurate to explain a number of modern day political phenomena.

The peoples of the Anglophone-Bamileke-Greater West are the most commercially oriented and successful of the three regions, and depend largely on trade and exports of agricultural produce (e.g. bananas, rubber, rice and other plantation crops). Oil production takes place off the coast of the southwest province. Because of the high population density and the resulting social organization that developed, concepts of property rights, sanctity of contracts and other principles of modern economics are far more prevalent than in the other regions. These peoples have thus been able to respond successfully to the world market economy. The forest peoples of the Greater South are the least commercial of Cameroon's many ethnic groupings and have, as a result, found their way into the "non-tradables," public sector as the country's bureaucratic corps. Their inability to compete in the modern market economy, their lack of control over the economic assets (forests are primarily in the hands of foreigners) of their region, combined with their dominance of Cameroonian political life, have ultimately turned them into consumers rather than creators of wealth. The people of the Greater North have had a successful tradition of commerce and trade but have become uncompetitive under a subsidy system which has protected their import-competing exports from foreign competition. While the Greater Northerners are no closer ethnically-culturally to the Bamileke-Anglophones than they are to the Forest Peoples of the Greater South, they have tended to side politically with the latter because of their fear of the former's potential dominance, in political as well as economic affairs.

Thus has a single cleavage based on ethnicity transformed and manifested itself into numerous dimensions, mutually reinforcing, and having the net effect of deepening negative attitudes and behavior between Cameroon's culturally and ethnically diverse population. It is no surprise that the three largest political parties, i.e., SDF, CPDM, and UNDP, conform to the multi-dimensional aspect of ethnicity and the cleavages it has spawned in social, political and economic life. Much of Cameroon's modern history has been one of the control of the institutions of state in order to redistribute wealth from those who create it to those who do not. In practice, it has led to discrimination in the domains of higher education, public sector and parastatal employment, and military appointments. The link then between ethnicity and state building at the expense of nation building is a fundamental fact of Cameroon's evolution.

C. A Timely Crisis: The Economics of Political Liberalization

By 1986 it was already clear that Cameroon's commodity export-led economy, which had averaged an annual GDP growth rate of 7.5% between 1970 and 1985 was running into serious problems. The collapse of global oil prices in 1986 came on the heels of decreased oil production and, more importantly, a general decline, since the early 1980's, in the country's

traditional exports: coffee, cocoa, and cotton. Looking at 1986 as a transition year, i.e, between a growing economy and economic crisis, "the next seven years were marked by economic contraction with no end in sight."⁴ Since FY 1985/1986 Cameroon's terms of trade have declined by 70%, GDP has fallen some 30% to 40%, and the country has added close to \$3.0 billion in external debt (the 1984 external debt stood at \$2.7 billion), and it is currently growing at 30% per year. Under pressure from its many creditors, both internal and external, the Biya government has accepted the need to implement more austere policies, and as a price for IMF "standby agreements," World Bank Structural Adjustment Loans, and Paris Club debt relief, it agreed to undertake a series of economic reforms. Considering that these three multi-lateral institutions, as well as the African Development Bank, have each suspended their programs at least once, if not twice during this period, one can only summarize the government's seriousness about its austerity measures and economic reform program as being "halfhearted" at best.

While some of the reasons for the country's economic slide have been outside of government's control (e.g. terms of trade, commodity prices, and overvalued exchange rate), the overwhelming opinion of all those interviewed and the numerous studies reviewed, indicate that poor governmental policies combined with even worse public management are the root causes of today's situation. The one-party state, including a compliant legislature and subservient judiciary, and with little organized private sector opposition, had no reason to be either accountable or responsive to its citizenry until the dimensions of the economic crisis were clear to all because, for the most part, they were felt by all. By early 1990, government was no longer able to contain previously latent or suppressed opposition including a "reduced tolerance for political repression, and a new focus on ethnic and linguistic differences."⁵ Since then government has undertaken, however grudgingly, a number of political reforms which have led to a significant opening of what had been a monolithic system.

Cameroon's descent into economic crisis, followed by the rise of popular discontent and eventual measures associated with political liberalization, is not an unusual pattern in Africa nor, for that matter, in other parts of the world (e.g., Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union). What perhaps differentiates Cameroon from other African countries is a combination of 1) the relative lateness of its economic crisis and 2) the country's innate wealth which has permitted government to delay the pain of economic reform and the necessity of having to implement a corresponding set of meaningful political reforms. While one cannot take pleasure in the pain and suffering that the economic crisis has brought to a significant number of Cameroonians, it was, in fact, inevitable given the nature of political life in the country. Putting the best face on what is bitter medicine, can be summarized perhaps by stating that the crisis came at a time

⁴ see "Foreign economic trends and their implication for the United States: Cameroon," prepared by the American Embassy/Yaounde, for the U.S. Department of Commerce, October 1992.

⁵ See, "Cameroon: Background to a Crisis," by Pierre Englebert, in CSIS Africa Notes, number 130, November 1992.

when both external and internal conditions and events were most favorable to a relatively⁶ peaceful shift to more non-state participation in the political system.

D. The Current Scene: State Disengagement and Grudging Political Reform

1. State Disengagement and the Rise of Pluralism

A number of trends can be seen to have emerged as a result of the full impact of the Cameroon's economic crisis having finally hit home. In the area of public sector service delivery (e.g. health care, education, extension services, etc.) government has been obliged to severely cut back its provision of most such services as finances have been available for little more than the payment of employee salaries. With no funds to cover operating costs, let alone capital investment, government programs, particularly in rural areas, have virtually come to a halt. Government-operated health facilities for instance, have run out of drugs and medical supplies, and utilization rates, already low before the crisis, have dropped precipitously; funds for rural health care programs have been cut by 50% and were only 30% of the total Ministry of Health budget to begin with. Government extension services have been discontinued in most parts of the country as MOA extension agents are unable to visit farmers as they lack transportation and other logistical support. Finally, during the course of this assessment, two major government actions: 1) an overall 20% decrease in public sector wage rates and 2) levying tuition payments on university students, were instituted to stem public sector expenditures in line with structural adjustment requirements.

Governmental intervention in private sector affairs has also significantly decreased since 1989. This situation has been as much the result of strong donor pressure as it has been the sheer lack of finances, or any understanding on the part of government of free market economics. Parastatal involvement in the purchase and marketing of exports (e.g. cocoa and palm oil) and the supply of agricultural inputs (e.g. fertilizer and pesticides), has been greatly curtailed, the principle reason being the inability of these companies to repay either farmers or retail suppliers for their goods and produce. Subsidies, including artificially fixed commodity prices, designed to protect import substituting tradeables, as well as certain export crops, have necessarily had to be cut back due to the sheer inability of government to any longer financially support these schemes. A second liquidity crisis in the banking and financial system is looming following the failure of a number of government owned or partially controlled banks during the first crisis, little more than three years ago.

Government's disengagement from the arenas of public sector service delivery and private sector enterprise has been accompanied by a corresponding call for "the people" to become more involved in providing needed public services, and for the private sector to take up the functions

⁶ As the "1992 Human Rights Report for Cameroon," makes perfectly clear, state controlled violence and civil and human rights abuses were very much a part of Cameroonian life over the past year. The point made here, and expanded on later in this assessment, is that acts of state repression appear to be more a reaction to its inability, and hence frustration, to direct events as in the past, i.e., a loss of absolute control.

reluctantly relinquished by government. Thus, the ultimate effect of the economic crisis has been an opening up of large areas of public and private life, previously the preserve of government, to a host of non-profit and for-profit organizations. Coupled with the great changes in the political realm, a series of economic and political reforms were undertaken which culminated in dozens of new laws, decrees and regulations⁷ being passed towards the end of the 1980s and beyond. In addition to those actions emanating from compliance with various measures advocated under the structural adjustment program (e.g. a new investment code, new forestry policy, deregulation of prices, new cooperative law, and new labor code), a complimentary set of laws related to the formation of associations and political parties (as well as legalizing an independent media) were passed. The result: literally hundreds of new associations, including NGOs, being formally registered to undertake a range of civic, social welfare and developmental activities; dozens of political parties forming to contest first, legislative, and then, presidential elections; scores of newspapers and journals hitting the streets providing readers with information on everything from astrology to the doings of their favorite political candidate; and establishment of new enterprises providing goods and services in areas as diverse as health care and fertilizer supply. It has been, and still is, a highly dynamic period of sudden births and just as abrupt passings, as new ideas and aspirations either find fertile ground and bloom, or are plowed under to make way for better ones. In short, this period has marked the birth of pluralism in the form of a vigorous civil society and a vibrant, if informal, private sector.

2. Grudging Political Reform

The period from January 1990 to the present could be characterized as one in which internal opposition and external pressure have led to grudging political reforms on the part of government when no other acceptable alternative was available; and backsliding on promises and avoidance of issues which promised fundamental change in the political system and, especially power relationships. In December, 1990, the National Assembly approved a constitutional amendment providing for the formation of political parties, although it forbade those of ethnic origin ... a cynical policy given the composition of the "parti unique" and its role in fostering ethnic division. In April 1991, the constitution was again amended to restore the position of prime minister, an act primarily designed to win the loyalty of the northern provinces, since no actual powers were provided to the holder of this post of "head of government." A "National Coordinating Committee of Opposition Parties" demanded a "sovereign national conference," a la Benin and Congo, towards the beginning of May 1991. Biya's refusal to consider such a conference ultimately led to the "Ville Morte/Ghost Town" campaign that lasted from mid-May to mid-November. This campaign and moderation on the part of RDPC/CPDM (the government party), led to the president's call for legislative elections in early 1992; and a "Tripartite" Conference with representatives from the political parties, "independent personalities," and ~~delegates from the government.~~ ~~The tripartite meeting ultimately led to legislative elections which were boycotted by several opposition parties, including the SDF (the major opposition~~

⁷ See, "USAID/Cameroon: Country Program Strategy Concept Paper," an Analytical Study, prepared for USAID by Development Alternatives International, November 25, 1992.

party headed by John Fru Ndi), and ultimately ended up deepening the schism between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon when SDF refused to sign the final communique of agreements. The tripartite also set up a commission to look into reform of the constitution. As of this writing the exact fate of constitutional reform is uncertain and unknown.⁸ Presidential elections announced in mid-1992 were held in mid-October, and were judged to have been highly tainted with numerous irregularities leading to the conclusion that it was not possible to know who actually won.⁹ Thus on the four major issues: a sovereign national conference, constitutional reform, and legislative and presidential elections, which were deemed critical to the continued course of democratization in Cameroon, no definitive resolution on any of them has been reached. It was the feeling among the majority of informants interviewed during this assessment that unless and until there is progress on at least one of these fronts, no further meaningful reform can take place. It was, on the other hand, the feeling of these respondents that 1993 was going to be the year in which closure on one or more of these issues would finally come to pass.

III. ASSESSING THE GENERAL CLIMATE FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The following assessment focuses on the three sets of relationships that must necessarily be in equilibrium if democratic governance is to take hold in Cameroon, or anywhere for that matter: 1) the relationship between the state and civil society, 2) within and between the institutions of the state itself, and 3) between institutions of governance at the central or national level and those at the local government level. The first section of Part III looks at the nature of civil society institutions, including the independent media, and their capacity to engage state institutions in areas of governance and decision-making. Section two looks at decentralization and local governance in terms of facilitating popular participation in development, and local government as a way of providing a counter-balance to the centralized state and its administrative bureaucracy. The third section looks not so much at the institutions of the state as it does at Cameroon's current constitution and the structure of government and the power relationships defined therefrom. Part III, thus presents this assessment's findings and conclusions.

A. The Rise of Civil Society

The importance of civil society to democratic governance has been pointed out above. The institutions of civil society provide a countervailing balance to the power of the state through their ability to demand a right of involvement in areas of public management, and participation in and influence over the decisions which affect society at all levels. The groups and organizations of civil society should be able to articulate the aspirations, needs and will of their

⁸ ~~Annex 4, an article taken from the Cameroon Post of January 13-21, 1993, provides a good example of how one of the most important issues facing the country has been handled.~~

⁹ See Annex 5, the National Democratic Institute's "Interim Report" on the Cameroonian presidential elections, November 1992.

members to those who hold the formal positions of governance. Thus, their important role as advocates of the interests of the groups which they represent and as guarantors of government accountability and management effectiveness. An equally important function of civic organizations is in their capacity as educators of their members as to their responsibilities, rights and obligations as citizens in a democratic polity. The following discussion looks at the institutions of civil society in their capacity to provide these functions.

1. Freedom of Association and Right of Assembly

Until the passage of the new Law on Associations in May 1990, freedom of association, while provided for under Cameroonian law, was not exactly an enshrined right in practice. In fact, formal laws governing the registration of associations, and therefore providing their legal status, were so onerous and restrictive that the number of formal associations including Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), was just slightly more than three dozen prior to 1990. For instance, the oldest and strongest Cameroonian NGOs today -- outside of those affiliated with either the Protestant or Catholic church -- were obliged to incorporate in Europe (e.g. SAILD/Switzerland and APICA/France), to avoid local registration problems. As international organizations based outside of Cameroon, these NGOs simply registered with the Ministry of External Affairs whose requirements were far less rigorous than those of the Ministry of Territorial Administration which administered the registration process under the previous law.

The passage of the new Association Law reflects a significant turn-around in both government attitude and practice regarding the right to associate including the right to do so formally through organized groups. Registration now takes place at the prefectural level, and normally takes no more than two to four weeks, there being an automatic registration provision if the Provincial Governor's office does not respond to or take exception with an application within a four week period. A major problem with the association law, and one that affects registered organizations and those international donors which want to assist them, is that registration does not confer the right to receive financing from external sources for the funding of their local programs. This is quite consistent with the government's underlying reason, and longer term agenda for liberalizing the association's law, i.e., to mobilize local resources through local associations, and not formal NGOs, for the provision of services and investments that were previously provided by public agencies. In government's eyes, its disengagement from the delivery of public services and private sector life required a corresponding increase in societal involvement to fill the void in program delivery created by its departure. The real intent was to mobilize local organizations, rather than regional or national-level groups that could deal with government on a more equal footing and make demands and advocate policies which could be perhaps inimical to the interests of government.

Two other laws recently amended, i.e., the Labor Code and the Cooperative Law, also deal with issues of organization and association and are thus pertinent to an understanding of associational life in Cameroon. Likewise, a number of codes and laws related to business and enterprise formation (e.g. the Investment Code), have been passed of late which, in principle, facilitate the start up of new business ventures (e.g. the "guichet unique"). The labor union and cooperative

movements as well as small and medium enterprises have been equally affected by the new policy of liberalization. However, it is more than likely that the primary reason that these three groupings have been the focus of government's good intentions is closely tied to their economic, not social, dimension. Thus, they have caught the eye and interest of the donor community in terms of economic reform and structural adjustment issues. It should also be noted that religious groups, an important segment of civil society, must also register with MINAT to obtain legal status to operate.

This of course is the up-side of the right of association and freedom of assembly. During this assessment, as well as one undertaken during October 1992,¹⁰ several instances of the GRC's refusal to grant legal status to applicants under the association law were related, especially labor unions (SYNES, teachers and professors in higher education) and human rights organizations; the Jehovah's Witnesses also have not received approval of their application, and remain unregistered nearly three years after their initial petition. In addition, numerous instance of bannings or harassment of human rights organizations and a number of tribal-affiliated associations (Camerocn Anglophone Movement) were mentioned. Issues concerning political parties and election campaigns are better known and thus are not described in this assessment. The Penal Code has been, and still is, used to deny the right of assembly for groups and organizations which the government feels uncomfortable with, i.e. political parties and human rights organizations.

The pattern of liberalization and opening up of the political system, while at the same time placing restrictions on freedoms accorded, is witnessed in other critical areas as well. For instance, it seems to be common practice to pass and promulgate new laws, (e.g. labor code, investment code), but delay passage of the necessary enabling legislation that permits their implementation. Thus characterizes the actions of a government that left to its own devices would most probably have maintained strict control over these basic freedoms. However, as noted above, a combination of external pressure and internal opposition have forced the government to moderate its anti-democratic practices but not stop them. As discussed below, it is not only the overt actions of human rights organizations and political parties in their roles of guarantors of these basic freedoms, but equally important the full range of civic organizations, humanitarian organizations, NGOs etc., acting within in their own spheres of influence that can serve as effective advocates of change.

2. Associational Life in Cameroon

The initial impression which one receives when assessing civil society institutions in Cameroon is how few organizations there are which have any capacity to act in any but a limited way, whether in terms of geographical coverage or sectoral scope. There is a tendency to equate civil society with formalized institutions such as NGOs, which are officially registered and

¹⁰ Attached as Annex 6 is a draft report to the World Bank concerning an assessment of NGO sectoral activities and institutional capacities. The report, not for circulation, is provided for those readers interested in a more detailed understanding of the formal NGO community in Cameroon.

recognized through their legal status, and have at least the rudiments of an institutional structure, including staff and a place from which to work. By this measure, Cameroonian civil society is relatively weak and underdeveloped in comparison to other African countries. However civil society is not simply this set of formal organizations, but rather encompasses all associational life, formal and informal, modern and traditional, national and local. In this respect, Cameroon has as rich and diverse a civil society as anywhere on this continent.

a) Modern Structures: Formal but Weak

Because government has dominated the delivery of public services and economic life for so long, there was little room for the development of a vigorous NGO movement or vibrant private sector as found in many other countries in this region. As noted above, a primary effect of the economic crisis has been the disengagement of government from both the public domain and private sector, and a corresponding growth of the NGO community. There are, however, just a handful of well established NGOs working primarily in various sectors of social and economic development service delivery and training. The great majority of NGOs have come onto the scene within the last three years and, although lacking in institutional definition and capacity, and therefore having limited program impact, demonstrate an extremely high level of volunteerism. In fact it is these two elements, i.e., limited program impact and a high degree of volunteerism, which best describe the overall NGO community in Cameroon. This finding has particular significance for the future design of a D/G program which targets NGOs as means to increase democratic governance in Cameroon.

Most of the older more established NCOs have limited their activities to the domain of development and, strictly speaking, do not operate in the areas of advocacy and civic education and action. The "new generation" of NGOs however have shown a much greater interest -- not unsurprisingly -- to become involved in such areas as human and civil rights promotion, civic education and action and, to a lesser degree, policy advocacy. A major pitfall for those organizations which have become involved in these areas, and especially human rights monitoring and promotion, has been their identification with a specific political party or opposition group. As discussed above, such groups normally are affiliated with a particular ethnic group, regional influence and language. The net effect is a loss of credibility, and hence effectiveness. A future D/G project will have to deal with this feature of the Cameroonian political landscape, which is but an indication of the highly politicized and partisan nature of in all aspects of life today.

Institutional capacity, including technical sectoral expertise, management capability and financial solvency, is but one dimension of evaluating an NGOs overall potential for project impact. In this regard, looking at the breadth and depth of linkages that an NGO has to local grassroots organizations and communities is perhaps more important than assessing its immediate capacity to bring resources to bear in an efficient and effective manner to effect specific change. A combination of technical assistance and training interventions are normally sufficient to improve technical and management deficiencies. This is one specific area in which A.I.D. has built up significant experience and expertise. What no donor can assist with, and no NGO can acquire

in a relatively short time, are the linkages to, and knowledge of, the local milieu including, the building of trust and confidence among the local inhabitants. Viewing the NGO community from this perspective greatly increases its attractiveness as a medium by which to reach the local community level to provide civic education and mobilize people for civic action. Perhaps the most impressive of such institutions which could fulfill such an intermediary function are confessional organizations, including Protestant and Catholic churches and the Muslim religious community. The Christian and Muslim population together account for over 65% (40% Christian and 25% Muslim) of all Cameroonians, and their networks of parishes, mission-run health and educational facilities and mosques reach down to the lowest level of society and cover the length and breadth of the country.

Cooperatives and credit unions are two other institutions which, while not yet nationwide in coverage, do have an important presence in several of the larger and more economically-advanced provinces of the country. CAMCCUL, the umbrella organization of the Cameroonian credit union movement, has extensive networks of member unions throughout the Anglophone provinces, and USAID's involvement of assistance to it goes back well over a decade. The cooperative movement is just beginning to reorient itself, following the promulgation of the new Cooperative Law which has moved government out of its previous management role. There is every reason to believe that cooperatives, whether as marketing organizations or producer groups, will continue to increase in importance as a representative of large numbers of rural people. The example of coffee cooperatives which USAID is working with through its PRAMS project, indicates the potential of cooperatives acting in such an intermediary role.

Two other "mass" organizations, the labor union and the peasant movements, also portend possible avenues for reaching and mobilizing large numbers of people in both urban and rural Cameroon. The Confederation Syndicales des Travailleurs du Cameroun (CSTC) was created in May 1992 to replace the single labor union organization that was affiliated with the ruling party. The degree to which this new confederation maintains its independence from the party in power, CPDM, is yet to be determined fully, but with 16 different unions and over 400,000 members, the potential for its eventual participation in a D/G activity must be considered seriously. The Conseil de Federation de Paysans de Cameroun (CFPCP) is the apex organization representing some 25 different peasant federations. They are located primarily in the North, South, East and West provinces and have some 60,000 members, including large numbers of women members. The Federation is relatively new, and is being assisted by SAILD, one of the several indigenous NGOs registered in Europe and described above. The CFPCP is registered under the Associations Law while the CSTC is registered under the Labor Code through the Ministry of Labor.

The Cameroonian NGO community, such as it exists, cannot be considered as a true "movement," as such groups are in many other African countries, especially in the Sahel. There are a few "reseaux" or informal networks that group together NGOs working in a particular sectoral activity (e.g. PVO/NGO NERMS, a grouping of conservation-minded NGOs and local organizations), and one relatively new "Umbrella" organization, COPAD, representing some 35 international and indigenous NGOs working in various development sectors throughout the

country. Finally, many new women's organizations have emerged over the past two years, working in such areas as women's and children's rights (e.g. Association of Female Jurists and Association Against Violence Against Women), family planning (CAMNAFAW), nutrition (Femme et Sante), enterprise development (ASAFE) and the Media (Association of Women in the Media). Except for CAMNAFAW, most are operated on a completely voluntary basis with limited funding to finance their programs. There is little organized exchange between these organizations, although a fairly strong informal network, made up of women scattered throughout the professions in both public and private life, does exist. There is a need for a common organization that can bring these groups together and provide them with basic administrative and logistical support which would 1) permit increased impact from the donated time of their members, and 2) allow greater synergism in their activities. The network of professional women offers the nucleus of such an umbrella organization as advocated here.

b) Traditional Systems: Invisible but Rich

It took this writer the better part of two separate missions to fully understand that there existed a whole separate plane of associational life in Cameroon. It is so intertwined with the social, cultural and economic fabric of this country as to be invisible, and not just to the occasional visitor or short-term resident. In fact, when asking Cameroonians themselves about civil society and the organizations which make it up, most do not readily consider their informal, local level groups to fit this category. The fact is that local associations, mainly affiliated around ethnic groups, serve as one of the principal mechanisms for the transmission of information and education between groups and from generation to generation. They also have an economic dimension, and are often associated with the informal sector financial institution known as "tontines." One way to understand these groups is to view them as "mutual aid" societies that provide social comfort and economic assistance in good times and bad. They are by no means mono-dimensional. As noted, they combine social and economic functions, and provide cultural instruction and entertainment. Group affiliations are based on gender, age, functional or professional lines, and religious identification; at the base though is ethnicity. It was reported several times that such groups were used by the political parties to mobilize people for election purposes. They have also become the object in recent years of various types of non-political, developmental campaigns, such as in family planning and AIDS education. The importance of these traditional, grassroots, and informal societies have become even more important in today's Cameroon with the tremendous economic dislocations caused by the country's economic crisis and the corresponding structural adjustment and stabilization measures currently in effect.

The potential of working with such groups to increase civic education and mobilize for civic action is tremendous. The obvious concern is the fact that they are ethnically based. Hence they pose the risk that assistance could become "tainted" and possibly end up reinforcing the societal divisions which already exist. It was the view of most respondents, however, that these groups are a powerful force in the lives of all Cameroonians and cannot be ignored. The object should be to find ways of reaching them with messages that are positive and promote tolerance in all aspects of life. In fact, these societies also provide a major conflict resolution function

at the community level, and in many ways could be an ideal vehicle through which reach and teach people about the importance of diversity and pluralistic views, but with the concomitant need for tolerance and the rights of others. This is an area that needs much more study; it will be discussed in more detail below (Part V.)

3. Freedom of Expression & Information: the Media in Cameroon

As with freedom of association and the right of assembly, freedom of expression is provided for in the Constitution but has been severely curtailed in practice until the adoption of the new press law in 1990 that followed the Tripartite Conference. While this new law in effect created an independent media, or at least an independent press, it also authorized censorship (prepublication) and the right of the Ministry of Territorial Administration to suspend publication of "offensive" newspapers. This was a fairly common occurrence until the passage of the new press law, as well as prior to and just following the October 1992 presidential election campaign but less so since the new year. There are two printing presses in Cameroon. One is SOPECAM, belonging to the government, and which prints the two official newspapers, the French and English editions of the Cameroon Tribune. The other is Challenge, the independent printer that publishes many of the newspapers and journals of the free press. The government-owned Cameroon Radio and TV (CRTV) is the operator of the sole radio and TV stations in the country. As with the two daily newspapers, government is responsible for the content of all public media emissions. Considering employees of all public owned media are civil servants, there have been very few incidents involving the need to censor either such publications or programming.

Browsing through a stack of newspapers on any given day, calls into question how seriously censorship over the independent sector is practiced by government. It not only appears that just about any subject is fair game, but also that informational accuracy is not particularly high on the list of journalistic reportage. As might be expected, the independent press is highly partisan, with many newspapers serving as the propaganda arms of their respective political parties. The press seems to be the locus where the opposition and the government wage their wars at present, and there is surprising inefficiency, if not, laxity on the part of the censors in their daily reviews of the print media. Government permits the use of public broadcast media by private groups and individuals for educational purposes. Here again, however, programming crosses invisible lines and indirectly, at least, the government's policies and programs, if not legitimacy are questioned. A number of respondents reported that applications for radio frequencies have been submitted, as is provided for under the law, but there has been no corresponding action taken by government on any of the pending requests, with many having been filed over two years ago.

Newspaper bannings, harassment of journalists, owners, editors and even vendors, as well as jailings and beatings, have all been common features of the media newscape over the past three years. ~~On the other hand, reprinting of banned newspapers under different names, and less-than-clandestine sales of banned or controversial newspapers, are also part of the give and take (albeit not friendly) nature of public - private relations in the media arena.~~ Again, the pattern of government's almost schizophrenic attitude as regards a basic freedom is demonstrated in its

treatment of the media, as in so many other areas of private life. The bottom line, however, is that there does exist a significant degree of media freedom. What is also unfortunate, is that the independent media, and particularly that of the print media, has lost its credibility, and hence its effectiveness, as a means of educating people, due to its high degree of politicization. Likewise, its "watchdog" role vis-a-vis government has been compromised. In summary, government censorship is a significant, but probably secondary constraint in developing a free and independent press capable of serving the interests of a free and open society.

4. Summary and Conclusions

Civil society in Cameroon has a number of dimensions and incorporates an enormous range of diversity. A particular dimension that deserves attention is the dichotomy of informal/traditional and formal/modern institutions in civil society. In times of social, political and economic distress, there is a tendency for people to fall back on values, traditions and practices that have stood the test of time. This is precisely what has taken place in Cameroon since the late 1980s. Where traditional peasant and market economies stand side by side, people will make rational decisions to revert to subsistence practices and abandon market economics when the latter is no longer seen to provide the level of security that is commensurate with either short-term or long-term requirements. This is demonstrated by the fact that farmers are abandoning cash crop production, to the extent of actually tearing out cocoa and coffee stands, and moving into food crop production. Within the formal market economy itself, there has been a similar move underway in terms of the growth of the informal sector, both from new entrants and from those who have calculated that membership in the formal economy offers little in the way of benefit. Particularly in times such as these of economic distress, it would serve to overly-expose them to onerous rent-seeking and other arbitrary acts of enforcement by those in power. As discussed above, the traditional mutual-aid societies have become even more crucial forms of institutional succor in these hard economic times.

Such traditional institutions then, have become the building blocks of polities as well as societies. They are valued and have been tested by time, thus providing the legitimacy that so often is lacking in modern and formal institutions, state and non-state alike. Working through these traditional and in many cases, highly structured institutions, new ideas can be introduced and people can be mobilized to express their needs and implement their will. One of the problems, however, is how to reach these local level groups. This is where the more formalized NGOs have an important role to play. While their technical and management capacity is often limited, their contacts with these groups is extensive and their intentions, for the most part, are not questioned. A major conclusion of this assessment is that for civil society to fulfill its role as a countervailing force to the state, education must take place at the level where people learn best, i.e., in the context of their daily lives and within the institutions with which they are most familiar. Virtually all the respondents talked with during this assessment made the same case: the practice of democracy and good governance needed to take place at the grassroots level. People have to be converted into good citizens, and to understand that there are obligations as well as rights that go along with citizenship.

NGOs as intermediaries between the modern, formal world and the traditional, informal one were deemed to be the most appropriate means for reaching these local organizations and working with them to build citizenship and a civil society. Education, animation, and the promotion of local governance functions are consistent with the mission of the non-profit, non-governmental sector in democratic development as in economic development. In order to provide such services however, NGOs will themselves need to be strengthened, both in this intermediary capacity and as "independent agents" of the civil society that advocate policies that are favorable for their members (or clients) vis-a-vis government institutions. The immediate focus of such institutional development interventions would be those NGOs with the largest networks linking them to the local grassroots level. Such a strategy does not preclude working to develop or even create new NGOs which, in fact, could serve as apex or umbrella organizations for a particular network of smaller NGOs or local organizations working in a specific sectoral or technical field (e.g. women's organizations or conservation and natural resource management NGOs). In either case, the pay-off in terms of investment would be immediate and have a significant impact.

A second major conclusion of this assessment is that the informal private sector deserves a considerable degree of attention given its relative strength and vibrancy, in comparison to those enterprises comprising the formal sector. They lack credible representatives who could lobby for more favorable governmental policies relative to the needs of micro, small and even medium enterprises. They lack informational services concerning market prices in domestic, regional and international markets. Business management skills are rudimentary, and financial services geared towards their needs are virtually non-existent. As will be discussed in the following section on participation and development, the more centers of power that exist within a society, the less likely it is that any one will be in a position to dominate or impose its will on the other. The private sector is particularly important in this regard as its interests will be best served by an open free market, with a free and open polity, in which transparency and fairness in the application of laws and regulations are of paramount importance in establishing a climate conducive to investment and growth.

Finally, the potential that the independent media could play in the strengthening of civil society, and thus in promoting a balance with the state, is simply not being realized; although conditions certainly exist for it to do so. While there are numerous needs related to the technical aspects of producing newspapers or developing programs for the broadcast media, this is not where immediate attention is required. Training and education of all concerned participants, i.e., owners, journalists, editors, etc., about the role of media in a democratic polity must be promoted, and those who are ready to practice good journalism and programming should be supported accordingly. An equally important training requirement includes such areas as investigative reporting, and especially the ability to analyze economic trends and provide information needed by businessmen to make rational market decisions. Finally, the owners of ~~independent papers must realize that they are engaged in a business activity, and unless they~~ begin managing their papers along such lines, then it is more likely that their doors will close due to bankruptcy than by being shut-down or banned by government.

In conclusion, the potential for strengthening Cameroonian civil society to act as an equal partner under a system of democratic governance is attainable under the current political climate and feasible from a programmatic perspective. The state has lost its ability to manage civil society in Cameroon. The arbitrary and contradictory actions which are being witnessed today are those of an increasingly impotent, although still not powerless, government. Increasingly, inertia and inaction have become substitutes for policy formulation and implementation. Random violence seems to have replaced organized repression although this is hardly comforting to those who are its object. There is an impression that the cost to the state in trying to reestablish its monopoly of power in societal relations is probably greater than it, or the institutions of civil society, are willing to bear and tolerate. In such a situation, incremental and targeted interventions can hopefully move the process of democratization along in a relatively peaceful manner.

B. Popular Participation: Voice & Choice in Development and Local Governance

1. Popular Participation and Self-Governance: The Scope of Decision-Making

Little more than five years ago discussing participation in terms other than those related to development would probably not have been included in the final text in any given design document. But then, five years ago issues of democracy and governance were not discussed in formal development circles concerning Africa. Today D/G programs, more often than not, concern themselves with creating an enabling environment for economic development by focussing on macro-level issues such as improving the performance of the "big three" institutions of government, i.e., executive, legislature and judiciary; and the big two of civil society, i.e., NGOs and the media, in order to ensure broad-based, sustainable economic growth. A result of this more macro-level view of D/G has been that participation in its older and more familiar usage -- as a way to increase local decision-making in project design, implementation, and evaluation, as well as, in the distribution of the fruits of development -- got lost. What we might call "micro-democratization," or "democratizing development" are concepts that attempt to put the "popular" back in participation, relate it to development, drop it down a few notches to the local or grassroots level, and talk about increasing the capacity of local organizations for self-governance. In short, the enabling environment for economic development must also be generated at the level where most people live, and where a large percentage of economic activity takes place. An emphasis on democratic governance within local-level development organizations and civic groups probably has a more realistic chance of producing desired change in behavior, if not attitudes, in local institutions in the short term, than attempting to change the macro-level institutions of the state, or to a lesser degree, of civil society.

A noticeable pattern that has developed over the past several years in response to Cameroon's economic crisis is the growth in the provision of public services by both for-profit and non-profit private sector organizations and enterprises. Private medical clinics and primary and secondary schools have become more prevalent as parents become increasingly unhappy and disillusioned with the quality of care and service that public-run facilities are now providing. Private agribusiness companies have begun to replace government or parastatal-provided services such as extension and the provision of inputs; and two new privately-owned banks have come into

existence to serve the needs of smaller businesses unable to acquire loans through the government-owned or controlled banking system. The growth in the independent media, and particularly the press, has been tremendous and continues to evolve including the on-going shake-out of unprofitable newspapers ... a necessary and healthy function in any market-based service. Non-profits or NGOs continue to provide much needed goods and services in both rural and urban Cameroon. Cooperatives, CAMCCUL the credit union movement, church-run schools and health facilities are just some of the NGOs which have had a long history of public service delivery and have thus been intensively involved in self-governance practices at the local level. The scope for increased participation in decision-making and self-governance relating to local needs, or control over local resources, is an area with great potential. This will continue to be true whether or not the economy improves. Thus the need to build democratic governance concepts into local governance practices.

2. Decentralization: In Development and in Local Government

The practice of decentralization provides the enabling policy environment which facilitates increased popular participation in local decision making, both in development activities and in local government. Decision making in developing countries most often centers on issues of development: choosing among different alternatives and priorities, formulating policies, designing projects, mobilizing and managing resources, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits, and maintaining and sustaining them over the long-term. Governance, then, is largely about managing the process which we call development. It takes place both within and without of the formal institutions of government including its administrative apparatus, the bureaucracy. As discussed in Part I, "any entity, at any level of the political system which manages resources and produces benefits for its members, is practicing a public -- state or non-state -- governance function." A policy of decentralization, in principle, provides for the practice of governance at the lowest levels of political and economic life.

In Cameroon's system of public administration, the "commune" is the formal institution of government at the local level. However, it has little practical governing power, which is primarily the result of 1) current policy as embodied in the local government law and which reinforces and centralizes decision making responsibilities at the national level; and 2) its inability to collect and/or retain revenue for use in the provision of public services ... not to mention its own self-maintenance. Likewise, regulatory functions (including those related to business and commerce), and law enforcement responsibilities, are carried out at the commune and municipal level by the local offices of state agencies whose vertical loyalty is far stronger than its horizontal allegiance is to local government. Government is currently working on a new decentralization policy which is supposed to be placed before the National Assembly this year. Communal and municipal administrators have been locally elected but no elections have taken place since the establishment of the multi-party political system, since President Biya postponed scheduled elections that were to have been held in 1991. ~~It had been widely expected that municipal elections will be held this year, and the March/April period is the anticipated time considering the provisions of the election law that sets a deadline for postponed elections to be held within 18 month of their originally-scheduled date.~~ "Traditional courts, many at the

communal level and below, are extremely powerful "arbiters of justice" especially in rural areas. Their areas of jurisdiction include domestic and property disputes, and they have in many cases, served a probate function as well. Their authority varies according to region and ethnic group, and to the extent that their actions are viewed as transparent."¹¹

The provision of public services, (e.g. health, agricultural extension and education) are the responsibility of the concerned line ministries. The trend towards decentralizing decision making is far greater in areas of service delivery than it is in the administration of local government. This goes back to government's inability to any longer provide such services from its own resources. Thus, decentralization is seen as a way to shift a good deal of the burden for the provision and management of resources to the local level. Perhaps the most defined and developed decentralization strategy in relation to public service delivery is in the area of primary health care. The strategy has led to a significantly increased role for the local population, through their community health committees and in the co-management and co-financing of health services within their respective communities. Parents associations are also becoming more involved in the affairs of local public schools which serve their children. In Cameroon, where education is highly valued, this trend of greater parent participation in decisions relating to school management and financing is likely to increase significantly as the economic crisis deepens. In some cases, cooperatives are beginning to include extension education in relation to production of certain crops for their members. NGOs and local organizations including traditional tribal authorities responsible for providing services to the public, or which have responsibilities related to the management of people and local resources (especially natural resources) for developmental purposes, should be strengthened in their capacity to provide effective public management functions at the local level.

3. Summary and Conclusions

Conclusions are based on the principles of establishing and maintaining relative equilibrium between state institutions at the central or national level, and those at the local administrative level, as initially discussed in the opening paragraph of Part III. The central conclusion is that there is little or no equilibrium or balance between local governments and the centralized administrative institutions of the state. Until there is a decentralization policy enacted into law that increases the powers and authority, as well as the resource base of local government, vis-a-vis central government, there is little likelihood that assistance to the former would be of any use. If such a scenario did unfold, then assistance to the up-coming (in principle sometime this year) municipal election process would make good sense. There is probably good reason to assist municipal elections even without a formal decentralization policy, on the basis of promoting free and fair elections. On the other hand, freely-elected communal and municipal administrators, who must function under existing laws and policy (i.e., disequilibrium), are no more likely to succeed in their governance function than their predecessors who were elected within the one party framework. Further consideration and review of this issue is required, as

¹¹ See Annex 7 attached, "1992 Human Rights Report for Cameroon," prepared by the United States Department of State, 1992, page 8.

is more in-depth study of the whole realm of local government and decentralization. This should take place during the PID stage of design.

Within the context of state - civil society power relationships, the issue of participation and local governance is extremely important in terms of the design of the Missions sectoral programs and projects. Building the capacity of NGOs, local organizations and even private sector micro and small enterprises that can and do provide public services for local communities is a process which should create numerous centers of self-governance capacity outside the formal state publics' framework. These self-governing, non-state publics are the building blocks of democratic governance at the grassroots level. They serve as 1) incubators where civic education and social learning take place, 2) countervailing centers of power to state institutions which can influence decision-making through advocacy and lobbying efforts, and 3) ensure public accountability and effective management public resources. Thus building D/G principles and practices into new design efforts and finding ways to reinforce them through a "free standing" D/G activity, are probably the two most important types of interventions that can be undertaken in the Cameroonian context. One of the most important lessons learned from the earlier designs of D/G activities in Africa, (e.g. Rwanda and Zambia), is that, unless democratic governance projects are integrated fully with other social and economic interventions undertaken within a given country program, the likelihood that either type of activity will succeed is greatly diminished. This takes us full circle in the conception of the Africa Bureau D/G Program: 1) that sustainable, broad-based economic growth required an enabling environment defined in terms of democratic governance, and 2) conversely, without economic growth and the expansion of opportunities provided in a free market system, it is highly unlikely that pluralism and good governance will have the necessary environment in which to survive. In short, economic development and democratic governance are mutually dependent in concept and in practice ... particularly in A.I.D. development programs.

C. The Supply and Demand of Democratic Governance

The emphasis in this section is to focus on the conception and, to a lesser extent, the practice of power relations at the level of the state, and specifically between and among the three primary state-level institutional actors: the Executive, the National Assembly and the Judiciary. Conceptually, the definition of relationships among these state actors is spelled out in the 1972 Cameroonian Constitution (attached as Annex 8) and its numerous amendments. The preceding sections on both background and assessment, have attempted to provide a sufficient glimpse of how the Constitution has been translated into practice, although a few additional examples are provided below.

1. Cameroon's Constitution: An Imbalance in State Relations

Cameroon's constitution provides for, and in fact, the history of the country is an extended lesson in, the acquisition of power on behalf of a strong executive branch, specifically the Office of the President. Although multi-party legislative elections were held in 1992 and opposition parties nearly gained a majority of the seats in the new legislature, the "parti unique," CPDM,

was able to forge a working majority, and thus extend its authoritarian rule under the guise of a multi-party political system. As such, "the President and his inner circle of advisors, many from his own ethnic group, continue to make all the important decisions."¹² Even had a truly strong and representative opposition won control of the National Assembly, this would not have significantly changed the ability of the President to act as he wished, or have resulted in any decrease in his overall authority, because "the Constitution favors the executive branch over the legislature. Under the Constitution the President has the right to dissolve Assembly and call new elections at any time; to return bills for a "second reading," requiring that they be passed by a majority of the full Assembly; and to govern by decree when the Assembly is not in session. With a working parliamentary majority, the ruling party and its coalition partner set the legislative agenda, preventing many opposition initiatives from coming to a vote."¹³

In a sense the Judiciary is even in a less favorable situation vis-a-vis the Executive than is the Cameroonian Legislative Branch. While the National Assembly is at least a separate branch of government, the Cameroonian court system is part of the Executive branch and thus not even an independent branch of government. The entire court system is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice thus, making all magistrates in Cameroon little more than civil servants directly responsible to the Minister of Justice. In discussions with numerous members of the judiciary, the Faculty of Law at the University of Yaounde, and many private lawyers, (both members of human rights NGOs or the Cameroon Bar Association), it was made clear that in cases with obvious political overtones -- which many cases have been over the past three years -- the freedom of a magistrate to render a judgement without political interference from the executive branch (i.e., the Presidency or the Ministry of Justice), was, and still is, virtually impossible. In cases which are not of a political nature, the likelihood of a favorable decision is just as likely to occur as a result of rent-seeking, or a magistrates lack of familiarity with the law, as from a dispassionate judgement based on the merits. In short, because there is little transparency or accountability in the rendering of decisions, neither the court system nor its officers are held in very high esteem.

2. Increasing Governmental Accountability and Effectiveness

One of objectives of this assessment was "to determine and recommend for USAID consideration, the possibilities and opportunities for governmental transparency, accountability and integrity." The fact is, until there is separation of powers within the institution's of the state, and the executive branch's powers are brought into parity with those of National Assembly in particular, there can be little increase in any of the of the attributes associated with good governance. This conclusion is specifically related to interventions which are intended to directly change any of the three institutions in particular, or the more amorphous government in general. The issue is a structural one. The Cameroonian Constitution was deliberately structured with an inherent distortion in the nature of the structural relationships which it

¹² Ibid, "1992 Human Rights Report on Cameroon," page 14.

¹³ Ibid, "the 1992 Human Rights Report for Cameroon," page 14.

defined. Until the Constitution is reformed, there is little in the way of direct assistance to either the Legislative or Judicial branches which will change the fundamental structural distortion, and hence the behavior, of the Executive and its government. The only way that improvements in such good governance characteristics as transparency, accountability and integrity, not to mention legitimacy, can be achieved, is through the strengthening of the institutions in civil society which can at least brake, if not check, the unrestrained abuse of state power. While specific approaches and strategies for increasing civil society capacity will be covered in more detail in Part IV, below, suffice it to say that the underlying principle behind this position is that more than thirty years of state concentration of power have atrophied the free exercise of individual and collective will in matters of governance. Until honest actions by government are taken to permit legitimate participation in governance matters, then the only practical, if not, moral position, is one of non-state support.

3. Summary and Conclusions: Forging a Social Contract

The conclusion of this assessment is that all three sets of relationships which ultimately define the nature of democratic governance in Cameroon are in serious disequilibrium. The relationships between the institutions of government have just been reviewed and were found to be in imbalance, as a result of structural distortions built into Cameroon's 1972 Constitution. In a similar vein, relationships between local government and the administrative institutions of central government are also out of balance, and codified as well, in the laws of the land. Finally, the civil society - state relationship has never been in balance, and thus civil society has never been able to serve as a counter-force to unchecked state power. The sole difference, and the one which ultimately justifies undertaking a democracy and governance intervention in Cameroon, is that the state and its agencies, no longer fully control, and certainly can no longer manage, the process of an emerging, dynamic and pluralistic civil society. Similarly, focussing on participation in decision-making, as the critical ingredient in building democracy and good governance, at any level, and in any endeavor, permits a return to previous approaches and methodologies for promoting development and self-governance at the local grassroots level. It permits USAID to build into all its programs and projects D/G principles and interventions, thus making them more independent of circumstances encountered in the world of politics, and the directive, stand-alone D/G interventions which are designed to bring change to this chaotic world.

The final aim of any democracy and governance project should be to promote consensus between the governors and the governed on the "rules of the game," including the legitimate and necessary participation of the latter in the management of public affairs. Particularly in the Cameroonian context, agreeing on the rules of the game includes the issue of ethnicity, and its several mutually reinforcing dimensions. One of the fundamental precepts of democracy is the notion of tolerance and respect for minority rights. To a significant degree, the tensions of ethnicity have been artificially generated by those in power for their own cynical purposes. A more enlightened leadership, it is postulated, will automatically reduce the dimension of ethnicity as a barrier to reaching societal consensus. Equally, if not more important, and a finding that was reconfirmed over and over in discussions with Cameroonians in all walks of life, was the

importance of the "generational" dimension. Much in the same way that the torch was passed from one generation to another in the United States, so too is the torch changing hands in Cameroon ... from those born and raised in the shadow of colonialism, to those born in the shadow of freedom (literally). As in many types of changes that have taken place over the years, it will be up to the youth of Cameroon to find the consensus in societal relations that their parents have been unable to reach.

IV. A.I.D. PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES

Part IV provides an overall set of conclusions and recommendations as to what type of interventions might be considered in an actual D/G project. The discussion starts with a number of opportunities which currently exist, and then looks at a corresponding set of strategies and practical implementation arrangements which could be used in operationalizing a project activity. Before commencing with these issues, however, an answer will be provided to the question: "what is the general climate for participatory governance in Cameroon,."

The government of Cameroon essentially has no commitment to the principles of democratic governance. Left to its own devices, there is little doubt that it would continue to try and maintain its dominance over the institutions of state, as well as, those of civil society. Fortunately, Cameroon does not live in isolation and, thus, is subject to forces, economic and political, from outside of its borders. Economics have, as much as any single element, been responsible for the change in the government's behavior. Because of the "Crisis," it has had little choice but to withdraw from many areas of public life in which it had been the dominant force since independence. This provided an opening for two types of internal pressure to continue pressing for additional political liberalization. Donors, resident in Cameroon, have been instrumental in encouraging government to undertake policies which are more favorable to creating an enabling environment for economic growth. Coincidentally, these policies happen to encourage good governance, and a larger role for private sector participation in the management of public sector affairs. The greatest pressure however, has come from Cameroonians themselves. The small opening afforded by the economic crisis has permitted the forces of civil society to demand change in both the political and economic systems over which the state has ruled for over thirty years. In relative (to many other African countries) terms, the change that has taken place has been peaceful, though not without sporadic violence. Government can no longer rule as it once did, which included ignoring any meaningful dialogue with its citizens. It must now govern with some semblance of participation from the various segments of the non-state, and at least listen to their demands, if not act on them. It is this small but significant change in state - societal relations that leaves an opening for USAID and other donors to develop activities which can incrementally build the power of the civil society to deal with the state on terms of equality. It needs to be clearly understood however that it is in support of civil society's agenda.

A. Strengthen Civil Society: Nation Building

"Balancing the State/Building a Nation," as best as any phrase can, captures the principle dynamic that has characterized Cameroon's political evolution since independence. The only way to overcome the effects of state building, and begin the process of nation building, is to support the development of a strong and vibrant civil society. This is not a short-term exercise, and will require a commitment for at least a medium-term package of assistance. Civil society in Cameroon has to not only develop its own capacity, it must overcome thirty years of state dominance, and the spiritual, as well as physical impact, this has had on society. As has been previously discussed, the opportunity exists ... the climate is favorable for such an undertaking. The nature of the interventions to be developed will necessarily revolve around the building of capacity in civil society institutions. Non-governmental organizations, the media, the for-profit private sector, are the primary institutional targets of capacity building assistance. Such support would be designed to permit these organizations to reach people at the grassroots level and undertake programs of civic education and training. In this sense, they are intermediaries in the process of social learning and building citizenship. While NGOs are looked as intermediaries in this respect, they should also be viewed as independent development agencies which represent their members (or clients) vis-a-vis government, and advocate and lobby for policies and services which are in their best interests.

As noted in Part III, one of the principal findings of this assessment was the dearth of formalized NGOs, and their relatively weak institutional capacity. This was off-set by the fact that there exists a very rich and extensive network of traditional and informal local organizations which serve numerous social and economic functions for their members, including that of mutual aid. Building the institutional capacity of NGOs to work with and through these traditional institutions, will ensure that the greatest number of people are reached, and provided with civic education and mobilized for civic action. Specifically, NGOs with the greatest outreach capacity should be those that are initially targeted for immediate assistance under a project. The church, labor unions, cooperatives and credit unions, to name a few, offer the quickest way to reach the greatest number of individuals and local organizations. Consideration should also be given to supporting efforts by informal networks of NGOs within a given sector to create their own umbrella type organization which could provide a common set of support services and training interventions to its different members. Women's groups are one of the immediate possibilities in this regard. There are numerous small and dispersed groups all over the country that could benefit from a common focal point, especially in gaining greater impact from their individual programs through the benefits of synergy which would be promoted by having a common forum in which to meet.

Institutional support to these organizations implies more than technical assistance and training in such areas as organizational development or management training, although to be sure these are important requirements. It also involves modest assistance for an organization's operational needs, including *inter-alia*, office equipment, staff salary support, transportation etc. One of the most difficult aspects of this set of interventions will be to ensure that the tremendous amount of volunteerism that does exist within the NGO community, is not undermined by

inappropriate levels of such support. Fortunately, A.I.D. has many years of experience from which to draw in the field of PVO/NGO institutional development.

What is really being supported and developed through this set of interventions is the strengthening of associational life, formal and informal, modern and traditional. Pluralism is probably the most potent antidote to centralism. Cameroon already has a strong and diverse associational life, but it has been inward looking and trying to meet the many needs, spiritual as well as material, of its members, an especially important function in times of severe distress. These traditional organizations with the assistance of their more formal NGO counterparts, can be shown that if they are to gain the rights to which they are entitled, then they will have begun turning their focus to issues which take place outside of their everyday lives. The commitment of supporting institutional development over a number of years is both justified and necessary in order to achieve the balance in relationships required for nation development. While it is strongly recommended that other donors be encouraged to support this process, it should also be realized that one of America's greatest strengths, and a true comparative advantage in the area of democratic governance, is the richness of its own associational life. There are many ways that this experience can and should be shared with Cameroonians.

B. Increase Democratic Governance in Sectoral Programs

The principles of democratic governance are best learned within the context of daily life and the institutions through which people participate in social and economic activities. The principal job of a developing country is development, both at the national and the local levels. Principles of good governance and the values of a democratic society can probably be best learned then, in the practice of the numerous functions which must take place during the course of development activities. The primary ingredient that is a precondition if such learning to take place, is participation. USAID can achieve great success in advancing democratic governance in Cameroon by simply emphasizing greater participation of the beneficiaries in the design, execution and evaluation of its sectoral programs ... something that it has been doing for a couple of decades now. By following D/G principles in the design and implementation of sectoral programs and projects, people and their institutions will much more likely become involved in areas of advocacy and participation in public decision-making. Likewise, issues of accountability, transparency, responsiveness and effective management will not be abstractions if they are promoted as part of normal transactions in the day-to-day running of their organizations.

C. Target Emerging Opportunities

The two areas of interventions discussed above relate strictly to the promotion and strengthening of civil society. Through these interventions it is expected that there will be an indirect impact on the behavior of the state towards increased accountability and management effectiveness, among other valued governance traits. This assessment has already concluded that direct interventions with state institutions will have little or no bearing on its commitment to moving towards the principles and practice of democratic governance. However, there are a number of

areas where USAID should be prepared to assist, should government call for such donor support. The following are considered targets of opportunity which would advance the process of political democratization in Cameroon:

- ▶ **Constitutional Reform:** Whether the government is serious about revising the Constitution and removing the structural imbalance which it promotes, is open to question. The government has, however, committed itself to some type of reform process, and expectations have already been raised among people throughout the country. There are a number of opportunities here for USAID, including printing of drafts of the revised constitution for wide dissemination; financing workshops and seminars throughout the country to solicit citizen input; and, if so requested, providing technical assistance in constitutional reform, or sponsoring trips to the U.S. and other countries for key members in the drafting process, in order to gain insight and perspective on the structure and content of different constitutional forms. For real political reform to take place in Cameroon, it must start with a reform of the Cameroonian Constitution.

- ▶ **Decentralization Policy:** Decentralization, both in terms of 1) local governments role in public governance, and 2) as it affects the provision of services and the participation of non-state actors in governance activities within public sector programs, including policy formulation and implementation, is also essential to advancing democratic governance both at the macro and micro levels. The government is currently revising its policy on decentralization and local government, and many of the line ministries are involved with decentralization issues as they try to increase local involvement in the delivery of public services. USAID should be ready to offer the government assistance in the area of local government reform and its corresponding decentralization policy.

- ▶ **Municipal Elections:** Municipal elections are currently scheduled to take place before the end of April 1993. Given the current problems which government is having in re-opening and managing the voter registration process, it is likely that these elections will be delayed, if held at all this year. USAID should be prepared, however, to assist in ensuring that municipal elections are conducted freely and fairly. The overall area of elections, and improving the election process is one that the Mission should be ready to assist at anytime. It is conceivable that with, or without a new constitution, new legislative elections could be held during the new 12 to 18 months.

These are but a few of the more important of the possible targets of opportunity which emerged during the course of this assessment. Being in a position to respond to them in a timely manner could possibly have a significant impact on the overall course of democracy in Cameroon.

D. The Outline of a Program Strategy & Possible Implementation Arrangements

USAID's draft concept paper for the CPSP talks of D/G as both a target of opportunity, and as a cross-cutting element in its sectoral programs. As a target of opportunity, a possible D/G intervention would involve the development of a stand-alone activity. The concept paper

discusses the creation of an "open forum," in the form of an NGO which could provide a number of D/G promotional and facilitation functions. In relation to the set of recommendations made in this assessment, some type of formal entity, whether, NGO, foundation, or center should be considered which could : 1) undertake a full range civil society support activities including the provision of training and technical assistance, and modest support grants to selected institutions, 2) reinforce D/G activities which will be built into the Mission's sectoral programs by holding workshops and seminars, and sponsoring studies and research, on areas that relate to sectoral program activities but at the macro, rather than micro-level, and 3) provide the Mission with a means to support emerging targets of opportunity in a timely and effective way. In addition, the NGO would either contract out, or directly undertake studies and research in other areas of democratic governance (e.g. decentralization and local government) and specifically work to promote contact between members of state institutions and civil society. It is through this mechanism that direct contact with state institutions can take place without requiring a formalized agreement by USAID and a given government agency. Facilitation of dialogue between and among all sectors of Cameroonian society, particularly the importance of tolerance and the need for peaceful resolution of conflict, is probably as important a service as any that a D/G project could render in the current context.

It is strongly recommended that rather than put this new D/G activity in terms of creating a new indigenous NGO, i.e., the Open Forum, that it be considered a USAID-supported "project," with a contracted "management and technical assistance unit." It is extremely important that this activity be looked at as improving the climate for democratic governance in incremental not radical steps. It is in USAID's manageable interest to start small and gauge the proper pace of activities in what is an extremely volatile and rapidly changing environment. Interventions must be measured according to capacities of participating institutions, and particularly indigenous NGOs and local organizations. The worst possible outcome would be getting out ahead of where the NGOs feel they should be at a given point in time. It is after all their persons that will be on the line.

Consideration should be given to contracting either a U.S University or PVO, to work in partnership with an African institution working in the D/G field, of which there are several of high standing, including two Pan African NGOs which are in fact based in Cameroon, i.e., The Institute of PanAfrican Development and INADES. Because of the extreme politization, primarily based along ethnic lines, of Cameroonian society, there is very little likelihood of finding an indigenous NGO which would be considered neutral. And besides, the creation of a Cameroonian NGO should be something that evolves, and an external project manager could both serve as a neutral entity in the unfolding process, and assess the universe of Cameroonian actors and the political climate before recommending one type of mechanism or group over another for longer-term assistance.

~~Obvious concern is given to the delicacy and sensitivity of a D/G project, and the contracting of its management to an organization outside of direct USAID control. Previous experience has shown, however, that engaging a U.S. PVO or University through a Cooperative Agreement mechanism, can provide the necessary and desired degree of control that USAID wants to exert~~

and maintain over the course of a project. This is an area which will require further thought and study.

V. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

A. Areas Requiring Further Investigation

While this assessment covered many different areas, it covered only one of them, i.e., civil society, in any depth. It is recommended that the following areas be the focus of additional study and research in preparation for, or during, subsequent design phase steps:

- A study to better understand the informal and traditional institutions of Cameroonian society, and how they can participate in activities such as civic education and action;
- Much more work needs to be done in the area of decentralization and local government;
- A more in-depth review of informal private sector needs as a means to gauge the areas in which a D/G project could provide assistance either through sectoral interventions built into discrete programs and projects or from a "stand-alone" project; and
- An assessment of organizational development and management training needs of the NGO community. An inventory of the NGO community could also be undertaken to determine their geographical operating areas; in what sectors they are working; and most importantly, the nature and extent of their linkages to local organizations.

B. Project Design Issues

It is strongly encouraged that this design process involve Cameroonians, individuals and organizations alike, in both pre-design and formal design activities. It is also felt that the development of the PID is probably as important as the Project Paper itself, and thus warrants an appropriate investment in personnel and time. It is also highly recommended that the Mission assign one person full-time to the PID stage of project development in order to ensure that the product which is sought is received.

1. Timetable for PID and Project Paper Development

Not considering a worsening situation either in Cameroon or Washington, the assumption is made that a D/G Project will be obligated before September 30, 1993. The following timetable is therefore suggested:

- Commissioning of studies and research pre-PID development in February and March 1993

- Workshop for key players who can serve to provide advice on design issues and/or participate in PID development: mid or late March
- PID development beginning late March or early April for 4-6 weeks
- Project Paper Development beginning early to mid June for up to six weeks

2. Design Team Composition

As noted above, it is recommended, at least for the PID stage, that a team of expatriates and Cameroonians undertake the exercise. The following disciplines or areas of expertise are recommended:

- Social Scientist: anthropologist or rural sociologist (local and/or expatriate)
- Decentralization/Local Government Specialist (expatriate)
- NGO/Local Organizations Specialist (local and/or expatriate)
- Political Scientist: Comparative Political Systems and/or Constitutional Reform
- An Institutional Development Specialist
- A Media Specialist

One of the recommendations of the PID will be the number and composition of the PP design team.

3. Contracting Options

It is suggested that the PID and PP design efforts be undertaken through the Africa Bureau's D/G Program managed by Associates in Rural Development (ARD) in collaboration with Management Systems International. This recommendation is based on both programmatic and contracting/administrative reasons. The D/G Project is to a large extent the repository of the Africa Bureau's knowledge and experience in this new and evolving field. Also it is administratively more cumbersome and management intensive for a Mission to engage several different consultants independently and then manage them over a four to six week period, than to undertake the tasks through one contracting mechanism.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES AND LIST OF CONTACTS
USAID/CAMEROON DEMOCRACY/GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT

(JANUARY 7 - 31, 1992)

Thursday, 7 January	Washington D.C. - Pre-Departure
Morning	Administrative Matters and Review of Documents
11:00	Meeting with Ned McMahon, Program Officer, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
13:00	Briefing by John Rigby, Project Manager and Bob Charlick, Senior Governance Expert, ARD, AFR ONI-D/G Project
16:00	Briefing with Tony Doggett and Al Ford, in-coming & out-going A.I.D. Cameroon Desk Officer; Bob Shoemaker and Jennifer Windsor, ONI-D/G; and Steve Honley, Office of Central African Affairs/Cameroon Desk State Department
Friday, 8 January	Washington D.C. - Pre-Departure
09:00	Follow-up meeting with Tony Doggett, Cameroon Desk and brief introduction to Ron Harvey, USAID/Cameroon Deputy Director
10:30	Pat Mantey, of Africa Bureau Information Center for help in locating and coping documents on African Democracy Institutes
Afternoon	Review of Documents
18:10	Depart New York for Cameroon
Saturday, 9 January	Travel to and Arrival in Yaounde, Cameroon
Monday, 11 January	Yaounde Segment Commences
08:30	John May, USAID/Cameroon, Regional Contracting Officer
09:00	Richard Greene, USAID/Cameroon Health Officer
09:30	Meeting with Peter Benedict, Mission Director USAID/Cameroon and Ron Harvey, Deputy Director
10:30	Meeting with Derek Singer, Director, Education and Human Resource Development, and Angeline Atangana, Program Assistant

- 11:30 Introductory meeting with Elzadia Washington, Deputy Head, Agriculture and Rural Development Division and Kifle Negash, Division Head, Economic Analysis and Private Reform and Investment (EAPRI)
- 14:00 Administrative matters including scheduling
- 15:00 Meeting with Tibor Nagy, Deputy Chief of Mission, American Embassy
- 15:30 Meeting with James Swan, Political Officer, American Embassy
- 16:30 Administrative Matters and Review of Documents

Tuesday, 12 January

- 08:00 Robert Blake, Principal Economist, The World Bank - IBRD
(tel: 21-08-36 or 20-31-57)
- 09:00 H.E. Franz Michils, Belgian Ambassador and Mark Refleut, Deputy Chief of Mission, Belgian Embassy
(tel: 20-27-88)
- 10:00 Jonas Mva Mva, Director, INADES/President of COPAD
(tel: 21-15-51 or 21-17-48)
- 11:00 Charles Hamilton, Deputy Head of Mission and Consul, British Embassy
(tel:22-05-45)
- 14:00 Henry Njiwah (30-50-68), Foreign Affairs Shadow Minister, SDF, and Dr. Nantang Jua (21-71-21), SDF "Think Tank"
(tel: 23-76-76)
- 15:00 Michel Hoffman, Country Representative and Denis Schutz, Program Director for Economic and Social Promotion, Association Francaise des Volontaire Populaire (AFVP)
(tel: 22-17-96)
- 16:00 Solomon Nfor Gwei, Chairman, National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF)/Secretary General Chamber of Agriculture
(tel: 23-28-85)

17:00 Ndim Albert Waingeh, Member of Parliament (CPDM) from Boyo, Northwest Province
(tel: 23-28-85 or National Assembly)

18:30 Rafael Emmanuel Bisseck, Director of Public Affairs, Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT)
(tel: 23-57-98)

Wednesday, 13 January

09:00 Bernard Njonga, Director, SAILD and Board Officer of COPAD
(tel: 22-46-82)

11:00 Dr. Diane Acha-Morfaw, Professor of Law, Faculty of Law, University of Yaounde/Member of Association de Lutte Contre les Violence Faites aux Femmes
(tel: 20-84-31)

14:30 Laval Gobeil, Conseiller (Cooperation), Canadian Embassy, CIDA
(tel: 22-18-22)

15:30 Gregoire Owona, Member of Central Committee of CPDM
(tel: ? - Palais de Congres)

16:30 Thomas Crawford, Project Development Officer, USAID/Cameroon

17:30 Mr. Abdoulaye Mazou, Deputy National Secretary for Political Affairs and Freedoms and Mme Pauline Biyong, National Secretary for the Press, Information and Propaganda, of the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) Party
(tel: 22-17-90 or 22-02-27)

19:30 Meeting with the Board of Directors of the Conseil (Union) de Federation de Payesans du Cameroun
(tel: 22-46-82)

Thursday, 14 January

08:00 Roberta Jones, Public Affairs Officer and Jeffery Hill, Cultural Attache, United States Information Service

09:00 Dr. Ngola Ngola, International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), University of Yaounde
(tel: 31-03-05 or 20-74-36)

- 11:00 Maitre Joseph-Antione Onambele, President, Tribue Sans Frontieres
(tel: 21-54-80 or 22-17-23)
- 12:00 Larry Andre, Political Officer, U.S. Embassy
- 15:00 Lisa La Croix, Representative, and Albertine Tchoulack, Homologue, Organization Canadienne pour la Solidarite and Development (OCSD)
(tel: 22-58-67)
- 16:00 Thomas McMahon, Division Head, Agriculture and Rural Development, USAID/Cameroon
- 17:30 Ester Ndalay, Vice President, Association de Lutte Contra les Violences Faites contra les Femmes
(tel: 20-41-37)

Friday, 15 January

- 09:00 Michel Larouche, Director, CARE International
(tel: 21-20-54)
- 10:00 Meeting with Board of Directors of COPAD
(tel: 21-15-51)
- 11:00 Reverend Dr. Bamebame, Faculty of Theology
(tel: ? - Faculty of Theology or Presbyterian Church)
- 14:00 Mme Olive Shang, Journalist, Producer: Women's Programs, CRTV-Radio; Director, Women in the Media and Bonso Women
(tel: 23-40-35 or 22-13-89)
- 16:00 Madame Belomo Calixta, Directrice, Bureau des Activites Socio-Caritatives/Conference Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun (BASC)
(tel: 31-32-08)
- 19:00 Professor Michael Hardy, Lancashire Enterprises/Overseas Development Assistance-U.K.
(0772-204129)

Saturday, 16 January

Document Review and Notes Write-up

Monday, 18 January

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- 09:30 Dr. Bernard Nzo-Nguty, Deputy Secretary General for Legislative and Linguistic Affairs, National Assembly of Cameroon (tel:22-11-31 or 22-17-31)
- 11:00 Mrs. Ndesso Ntanga, Coordinator, PVO/NGO NERMs Project (tel: 20-86-22)
- 15:00 Mr. Jean DJona, Second Vice President of the National Assembly (tel: 22-56-24)

Tuesday, 19 January

- Morning** Workshop on Democracy and Governance for Mission Division Heads, USIS and Embassy Officers
- 12:00 Mr. Herbert M'Cleod, Resident Representative, UNDP/Cameroon (tel: 22-41-99)
- 15:00 Dr. Dion Nguty, Director, and Richard Ngue, Deputy Director, Ecole Nationale d'Administration et Magistrature (ENAM) (tel: 23-09-31)
- 16:00 Dr. Teintcheu Andre Njiako, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Yaounde (tel: 20-86-90)
- 17:00 Mr. David Ndachi Tagne, Editor, SOPECAM/Cameroon Tribune (tel: 30-41-48)
- 18:00 Mr. Oube Ndzana, GERRDES Member (tel: 23-62-77)
- 19:30 Dr. Victor Ngoh, Department of History/University of Yaounde and SYNES (Higer Education Union) Member (22-46-20)

Wednesday, 20 January

- 08:00 Dr. Eboussi Boulaga, Member of GERRDES, University of Yaounde Professor (tel: 23-62-77)
- Morning** Travel to Douala

16:00 Mme Mankamte Yitamben, Executive Secretary, Association pour le Soutien et Appui a la Femme Entrepreneur
(tel: 42-29-70)

17:00 Mme Flavia Ngoma, Deputy Director, APICA
(tel: 42-12-28 or 43-26-36)

Thursday, 21 January

08:00 Michelle Sison, Consul and Graham Knight, American Embassy
(tel: 42-34-34 or 42-03-03)

09:00 Mme Epoo, Association of Female Jurists
(tel: 42-00-05)

10:00 Mr. Benjamin Zebaze, Director, Challenge Printing Company
(only independent printer in Cameroon)
(tel: 40-05-75 or 40-98-46)

11:00 Dr. Oscar Cordeiro, Director, Institute Pan Africaine de Developpement (IPD) - FrancoPhone Countries
(tel: 42-37-70)

15:00 Pious Bissek, Director MilkyWay Industries, Syndustricaam
(private Business/Professional Association)
(tel: 37-26-61 or 37-99-31)

17:00 Meeting with Board of Directors, Association of Female Jurists,
Douala Branch

Friday, 22 January

08:00 Dr. Njapoum, Douala Representative, LAACAM, Bamileke Cultural Association
(tel: 42-49-52 or 42-75-15)

09:00 Maitre Patrice Monthe, President, Cameroon Bar Association
(tel: 43-14-28)

10:00 Maitre N'tipe, President, International Association of Young Lawyers
(tel: 42-78-03)

11:00 Dr. Philip Langley, Principle Researcher and Dr. Luther Banga, Expert - Consultant, IPD/General Secretariat
(tel: 42-10-61)

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Afternoon	Travel to Yaounde
Saturday, 23 January	Draft Outline of Final Report Preparation
15:00	Mr. Victor Ferrari, Director, SNV (Dutch Volunteers) (tel: 20-27-72)
Monday, 25 January	Final Report Writing - Submission of Draft Outline for D/G Assessment
09:00	Dr. Paul Pogue, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Yaounde (tel: 22-12-65)
11:00	Richard Patard, Economic and Commercial Officer, U.S. Embassy - Cameroon
Tuesday, 26 January	Final Report Writing
09:00	Mr. Paul Ndembiyembe, Deputy Director General, SOPECAM and Member of National Commission on Human Rights and Freedom (tel: 30-36-93)
11:00	Mrs. Walla, Director, CAMNAFAW (tel:23-79-84)
18:00	Mrs. Marie-Louise Ngwa, Association of Cameroonian Women in the Media (tel: 31-30-54)
Wednesday, 27 January	Final Report Writing
12:00	Peter Benedict, Director, Ron Harvey, D/Director & Derek Singer, Chief, EHRD
Thursday, 28 January	Submission of Final Report (draft)
11:00	Adolph Ngauss, Secetaire a la Organization du Bureau Executif and Lousis Sombes, Secretary General, Confederation de Syndicats des Travaileurs de Cameroun (CSTC) (tel: 23 00 47)

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Friday, 29 January

10:30

Debriefing with Ambassador Issom

15:00

Oral Presentation to Mission/Embassy Officers

Saturday, 30 January

Final Report Submitted with Revisions/Depart Cameroon
(Praise the Lord)

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

American Embassy/Yaounde, October 1992, Foreign Economic Trends and their Implications for the United States: Cameroon, Yaounde, Cameroon.

Associates in Rural Development, November 1990, An Institutional Analysis of the Production, Processing, and Marketing of Arabica Coffee in the West and North West Provinces of Cameroon, Burlington, Vermont.

Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 1991, Cameroon: Background to a Crisis, Washington D.C.

Department of State, December 1992, 1992 Human Rights Report for Cameroon, Washington D.C.

Douxchamps, Francis, La Structuration du Mouvement Paysan au Cameroun, Echos du Cota, November 1992, Paris, France.

Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, June 1990, Decentralization Policies and Socio-Economic Development in Africa, Washington D.C.

National Democratic Institute, October 1991, Democratization in Cameroon: International Delegation Report, Washington D.C.

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USAID/Cameroon, June 1992, Draft Concept Paper, December 1992, Yaounde, Cameroon
Robert Charlick, The Concept of Governance and its Implications for A.I.D.'s Development Assistance Program in Africa, Prepared for the A.I.D. Africa Bureau under the Africa Bureau Democracy and Governance Program.

USAID/Cameroon, December 1992, Cameroon Agricultural Sector Overview, Yaounde, Cameroon.

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~~USAID/Cameroon, November 1992, Country Program Strategy Concept Paper: Analytic Study, Yaounde, Cameroon.~~

World Council of Credit Unions, October 1992, Cameroon Credit Union Development Project Phase II: Final Report, Madison, Wisconsin.

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