

Social Contributions of Indigenous Entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions Coterminous with West Cameroon, 1962-2016

Lambert Ngong Munang

University of Bamenda

***Corresponding Author:** Lambert Ngong Munang, University of Bamenda, Cameroon

Abstract: West Cameroon and later North West and South West Regions of Cameroon (the territory roughly representing erstwhile British Southern Cameroons), was replete with reputable indigenous entrepreneurs who emerged prior to and after the territory's attainment of independence on 1st October 1961 by reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. These entrepreneurs were engaged in a plethora of business and other activities that by intent or inadvertence generated far reaching impact. In spite of the significant role played by these entrepreneurs in enhancing social development, the true depth of their contributions to the social transformations experienced in their societies remained largely untold. It is in this context that this paper largely utilising Primary sources and employing a descriptive and analytical approach, examines the social contributions of indigenous entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions coterminous with West Cameroon. The findings revealed that, indigenous entrepreneurs initiated and promoted far reaching social developments across various communities. The paper established that, these entrepreneurs were associated with extensive networks of social relations, cultivated large families, involved in corporate social responsibility in the form of philanthropic gestures which saw the provision of a plethora of social services and infrastructure, patronised community development and village development associations, embellished various cities with beauty through magnificent structures and manned some cultural offices in their tribal societies. Principally, it emerged from the paper that, indigenous entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions coterminous with West Cameroon were nothing short of instruments of far reaching social transformation. They promoted the welfare of others through charitable donations of funds and other valuable resources with the goal of creating positive public image for themselves, enhancing their relationships with clients and creating a positive work environment.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Indigenous, West Cameroon, Bamenda, Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the independence and reunification of Cameroon in October 1961, there was the emergence of reputable indigenous entrepreneurs and corporate enterprises encompassing diverse business interests. This was particularly common in West Cameroon where these indigenous entrepreneurs included Frederick Mubang of Providence Comprehensive College (PCC), D. A. Nangah of the famed Nangah Company Ltd, S.K. Kilo of the Kilo Brothers Company Ltd, Daniel Che of the Che Company, S.P. Longla of the Longla Construction Company Ltd, Francis Max Moffor of the Cameroon Motor Transport Company, Joseph C. Kamga of HACAME Company Ltd, Albert Che Niba of the famed Niba Automobile Company Ltd, Charles Menyoli of Fakoship Ltd, William Ebobi Monangai of Simplicity Ltd, Henry Ndifor Enonchong of Fresh Foods Cameroon Ltd, Daniel Iyok of Samco company Ltd, Peter Ngufor of Farmers House Ltd, Amadou Danpullo of the Baba Dapullo Group and Michael Atabong of the famed Atabong Enterprise. West Cameroon (the territory roughly representing former British Southern Cameroons) constituted one of the two states in the Federal Republic of Cameroon from 1961 to 1972. Following the institution of a unitary system of government in Cameroon in 1972, former West Cameroon was divided into the North West and South West Provinces and from 2008; the provinces were transformed to regions.

Most of the indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon were associated with donations and projects that consciously, systemically and sustainably served or attempted to solve local community needs.

The donations they made in various communities, either constituted their corporate social responsibility or outright philanthropy with far reaching impact on community development, church progress and personal development. Through their philanthropic donations, landmark projects were realised in numerous communities across West Cameroon and beyond. This engineered social change with lasting transformational benefits to society. It is centrally in this context that this paper examines the philanthropic activities of indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon and the transformational benefits that accrued either to particular communities or to society at large. Principally, the paper argues that, indigenous entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions coterminous with West Cameroon, masterfully generated far reaching social impact in their respective communities through their efforts in the provision of social and infrastructural amenities, development of transport and other public infrastructure, enhancement of education for the less privileged, financing and patronising church projects and activities, development of low cost housing facilities, as well as in patronising cultural and development associations/ initiatives.

2. CULTIVATION OF LARGE FAMILIES AND EXTENSIVE NETWORKS OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

As people who wielded economic power, indigenous entrepreneurs inadvertently handled a multifaceted network of social relationships. These entrepreneurs were people who clearly recognised the fact that social relationships provide access to the resources that are necessary to initiate, manage and expand business enterprises. They understood that business success depends vitally on properly managing these relationships. At their level, they were well acquainted with the usefulness of social networks in providing useful information on clients, suppliers, and even competitors. They were also abreast with the fact that appropriate social relations were relevant in providing personal, business and political contacts necessary for accomplishing capitalistic objectives.

Thus, these entrepreneurs cultivated very large but close knit family relations and worked hard to ensure their safety. Most of the entrepreneurs left a legacy of numerous descendants and close relations.¹ A majority of these entrepreneurs got married to several wives from diverse ethnic and socio-cultural backgrounds. This was intended to broaden their social networks so as to enhance to their entrepreneurial activities. Max Atanga for example had 12 wives with 75 children.² As a wealthy entrepreneur and real estate owner in Bamenda, it was easy for him to manage the large family. Many of his children were involved in his entrepreneurial activities. As a builder, he trained many of his children in electricity, building, plumbing, and other construction related skills. That is why; many of his children eventually became resourceful workers in the Public Works Department. In 1965, his son Christopher Max Atanga received a juicy sub contract from the Nangah Company to electrify the newly constructed Prime Minister's office in Buea.³

Sylvester K. Kilo on his part had 4 wives and 17 children. His economic viability to support a large family and need to broaden his social networks and relations for business and political purposes also explains his choice for several wives. His children had decent education with 9 of them studying in Europe and America. Thanks to this decent education many of them became very influential. One of his children worked with the African Development Bank and became the representative of the African Development Bank in Liberia. Another child of his worked with the World Bank. Still another held a top position at the American home land security. Back in Cameroon some emerged to occupy prominent political offices including a ministerial position.⁴

As an entrepreneur who understood the value of social relations, S. K. Kilo invested in cultivating social relationships. Often, when Kilo was on business trips in the 1960s and 1970s between Bansa-Bamenda, Victoria, Buea, Tiko and Kumba, he travelled with two vehicles. While he was driven in a Peugeot car, he was often accompanied by a land rover load of items such as potatoes, carrots, beans,

¹Zacheaus Ful Amandoh (retired social insurance worker and quarter Head for Ntemnifor quarter-Nkwen, 70 years) in discussion with the author, Foncha Street-Bamenda, 3rd February 2018

²George Atanga (Businessman and Grandson to Max Atanga Aged 55 years) in discussion with the author, Bamenda, 16th /02/2017

³Idem.

⁴Charles Kilo (Businessman and son to S.K. Kilo, 46 years) in Discussion with the author Foncha Street-Bamenda, 8th/12/2016.

cabbages and beef from Bamenda. The foodstuffs were meant to be distributed to friends in those places. From the forest and coastal region, Kilo would load the vehicle with food stuffs cultivated in the area such as yams, plantains and varieties of fruits that were considered delicacies in Bamenda for his friends and love ones.⁵ He often hosted his friend's children who travelled from Victoria, Buea, Tiko, and Kumba to attend school in the Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali, Sacred Heart College Mankon, Our Lady of Lourdes College Bamenda, St Augustine College Kumbo, and Cameroon College of Arts Science and Technology (CCAST) Bambili. His home was usually a beehive of activities when ever these schools reopened or closed.

Francis M. Mofor was equally a polygamist. He had 9 children with his legally married wives. He was also highly successful in providing his children decent education. They all studied in the most prestigious schools available at the time. All his male children went to Sacred Heart College Mankon. Thanks to the decent education, some eventually became Engineers and lawyers in the U.S.A., while back in Cameroon, others became top level professionals.⁶ Furthermore, Mofor did much to ensure the safety and dignity of his family relations. A story is told of how he rescued a cousin of his called Banabas Ndimah who had been sold into slavery to the Hausas. He later found him and as a man of immense wealth and influence, successfully redeemed him from slavery. Max Mofor proceeded to sponsor him in school and he eventually became a great police officer.⁷ He attended Roman Catholic Mission School Tabekem on the fringes of Nkambe where Max Mofor lived at the time. The decision to keep him around and not in his native Akum was probably due to his intention to continue benefiting from his labour services.

D.A Nangah on his part as was the case with his colleague equally established a large and extensive family. He had 4 legally married wives and at least 5 well known concubines. His four wives were from Ibo (Nigerian), Santa, Baforchu and Bakweri backgrounds.⁸ Getting married to women from diverse backgrounds was a well calculated strategy to spread his business tentacles and broaden his political influence. He had more than 30 children. D.A. Nangah was said to have been open handed. He did all he could to secure the welfare of his relations. He constructed houses for many of his relations who could not afford to acquire decent houses. It is widely held in his native Mbatu village that, he constructed homes for his female relations who were married to husbands who could not afford to acquire houses.⁹ The memories of the flamboyant, hectic and grandiose Christmas parties he offered every December 23rd-24, lingered on in the hearts of his compatriots long after his departure.

Michael Atabong the Limbe business genius equally associated with more than one wife and had 13 biological children who all studied in different parts of the world and later pursued juicy careers abroad and back home in Cameroon.¹⁰ For example, Augustine Atabong was a pharmacist in the USA, Dorothy Atabong a Biochemist in Toronto-Canada, Boyo Atabong a Chartered Accountant in the USA, Ateh Atabong a Pharmaceutical Scientist in Norway, Arrey Atabong a Computer Scientist in Toronto-Canada, Aminde Atabong an accountant in USA, Micheal Atabong Junior a Banker working with Dominion Bank in Toronto- Canada and Judith Atabong worked as a specialist with the FBI in USA.¹¹ Apart from sponsoring his biological children, Michael Atabong also generously sponsored the education of numerous extended family members, tribesmen and vulnerable children. Some rare exceptions of entrepreneurs who were not polygamists included Frederick Mubang and D.N Che. Nevertheless, they had several children. Frederick Mubang had 13 children and D.N Che had 8 children.

⁵Sylvia Clarice Kilo, "Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo: A Window into His Life" (Memorial & Thanksgiving in Remembrance of Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo, Church of Resurrection Burtonville, April 29th 2017), 5.

⁶Bridget Tamambang (Teacher, Daughter to Mofor, aged 61 years) in discussion with the author, Azire-Bamenda, on 28th November 2017.

⁷Bridget Tamambang (Teacher, Daughter to Mofor, aged 61 years) in discussion with the author, Azire-Bamenda, on 28th November 2017.

⁸Peter Ngong (Builder and nephew of D.A. Nangah, 55 years) in discussion with the author, Old Town Bamenda, 10/07/2017.

⁹Ngiah Caroline (Retired Health Worker and Niece of D.A. Nangah, 61 years) in discussion with the author, Njimafor-Mbatu village, 15/06/2017.

¹⁰Augustine Atabong (Pharmacist and son to Michael Atabong, aged 57) in discussion with the author, Down beach- limbe, 2nd July 2020.

¹¹Idem.

3. PROVISION OF SOCIAL AMENITIES

In a context where the acquisition of pipe born water was still a nightmare for many communities, some of indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon took the initiative to either provide financial and technical assistance for the realisation of water projects or worked hard to coordinate their communities to realise pipe born water projects. In his native Mbatu village, D.A Nangah provided pipe born water free of charge for the whole community.¹² He developed an improved water supply scheme in the early 1970s which largely served the water needs of Mbatu village. The project functioned well but was not sustainable after Nangah's death in 1990. Several years after his death, the water project was punctured by management crisis. The crisis ensued when the main caretaker of the scheme started charging huge connection fees and bills; where as in the days of Nangah, everything was free.¹³ This brought huge disagreement and highly punctured the water supply scheme. Nevertheless, D. A. Nangah was hailed for developing a water supply scheme for his native Mbatu village that largely served the water needs of the community.

Equally, S.K. Kilo was reckoned with, for providing pipe born water in Sov Village in Nso in the early 1970s.¹⁴ However, it should be pointed out here that the water scheme was meant to provide water for the Kilo Comprehensive College, a lay private secondary school owned and operated by S.K. Kilo at Sov. The entire Sov community benefited from this water supply scheme. The water scheme was later expanded and extended to supply water to other neighbouring communities. Furthermore, S.K. Kilo worked hard to mobilise people for other water projects in Kumbo and Nkar.¹⁵ This was probably motivated by his political ambitions as he soon became the CNU section president in Bui. In another example, the business magnet S. P. Longla who hailed from Pinyin, championed the Pinyin electrification project and was widely hailed for the success of the project.¹⁶ The Tiko based business magnet Paul Sinju, brought electricity to his village of origin, Balengou, and helped build several schools there. Bamenda based Peter Ngufor, the CEO and founder of Farmers House Ltd, was also acclaimed for financing a portable water supply project for his Bafanji Village in the North West Region of Cameroon.¹⁷ The project was well received in the locality and helped to foster a positive public image for Ngufor.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT AND OTHER PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The weight of the presence of indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon was also felt in the promotion of the development of transport infrastructure in their respective communities. D. A. Nangah for example, made landmark contributions in the development of roads in his Bamenda community. He was associated with sponsoring the tarring of a stretch of route covering a distance of about 1km in his Mbatu village.¹⁸ This route was christened "Nangah Street", while the route junction connecting Nangah Street with the main route was named "Nangah Junction". The names "Nangah Street" and "Nangah Junction" was an overt recognition and acknowledgement of the contributions of D.A. Nangah in road development.

In another example, D.N. Che was remembered for being the first to introduce road tiles in Bamenda. He was credited for generously tiling a stretch of public road around the General Hospital area in

¹²Ngiah Caroline (Retired Health Worker and Niece of D.A. Nangah, 61 years) in discussion with the author, Njimafor-Mbatu village, 15/06/2017.

¹³Ngiah Caroline (Retired Health Worker and Niece of D.A. Nangah, 61 years) in discussion with the author, Njimafor-Mbatu village, 15/06/2017.

¹⁴Charles Kilo (Businessman and son to S.K. Kilo, 46years) in Discussion with the author Foncha Street-Bamenda, 8th/12/2016.

¹⁵Sylvia Clarice Kilo, "Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo: A Window into His Life" (Memorial & Thanksgiving in Remembrance of Sylvester Kindzeka Kilo, Church of Resurrection Burtonville, April 29th 2017), 5.

¹⁶"Biography of S.P. Longla" (Commemorating and Celebrating the Life of Pa S.P. Longla, Bamenda, November 2016), 12.

¹⁷Peter Ngufor (Commercial Entrepreneur and former worker of the Nangah company, 74 years) in discussion with the author, Mile 3 –Bamenda, 15th /10/2017.

¹⁸William Tamo Nji (Retired Businessman aged 96 years) in discussion with the author Njimafor- Mbatu, 11/6/2017.

Bamenda not far from his home in the 1970s.¹⁹ Little wonder, the stretch of road from the Bamenda General Hospital, towards Ntarinkon market, was named after him – Che Street. In addition, the entire vast quarter behind his home was named “Behind Che”. The influence of this great figure on the social life of Bamenda was not therefore a matter of conjecture. In another example, Longla Street was named after the outstanding investments and achievements of S.P. Longla through Longla Comprehensive College (LCC) which literally transformed the entire quarter.

Equally, Michael Atabong, the proprietor of the famous Atabong Enterprise, made efforts to promote the development of road infrastructure especially in his Bangwa land. He was credited for initiating and patronising the construction multiple routes in Fontem. For example, Michael Atabong largely sponsored the construction of the Njenste route in Fontem in the 1980s.²⁰ He worked with the Focolare Movement to build routes and promote development in Fontem. Furthermore, Amadou Danpullo contributed several millions of FCFA in development projects across Esu and Kom. These included renovating the palace of the Esu traditional ruler, and the construction of a bridge on one of the rivers linking the Menchum Division in Cameroon and Nigeria. The realisation of this project significantly expanded trade between Cameroon and Nigeria as well as opened up cross border markets and opportunities for the border communities.²¹

Daniel Iyok the Limbe based business tycoon was widely appreciated for initiating and championing several developmental. This included the prominent role he played in financing and patronising the Limbe drainage project. Cognisant of his laudable contributions, he was held in high esteem by the Cameroon government. That explains why, he and his wife, Lucy Iyok, were some of the few Cameroonians invited to meet the Prince and Princess of Wales (Prince Charles and Lady Diana) during the couple’s royal visit to Cameroon in March 1990.²²

5. ENHANCEMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE LESS PRIVILEGED

Elsewhere, indigenous entrepreneurs promoted education in various facets. They sponsored the education of many young people from various backgrounds. S.K Kilo for example, sponsored the education of many children who hailed from Sov, Nso and beyond. In fact, his passion and need for highly trained and skilled craftsmen and women for his business led him to establish an ambitious social entrepreneurial venture by creating the first truly Comprehensive secondary school in Bui, located in Sov village. Through this venture, he provided nearly free education to hundreds of children in academic pursuits as well as the trades-motor mechanics, metal works and building construction.²³

Many people from Mbatu village can still narrate a seemingly inexhaustible list of Mbatu children whose education was sponsored by Nangah. Frederick Mubang equally granted scholarships for underprivileged children to study at every level of education. There was the example of Saboh Peter, whom Mubang offered to train freely as a secondary school teacher in the Higher Teacher’s Training College, ENS annex Bambili in 1977.²⁴ He received his training and between 1980 and 1985, served as the Principal of PCC. He later became a politician and Cameroon Member of Parliament. The business guru Henry Enonchong was also outstandingly involved in the promotion of scholarisation. He made giant strides to help the underprivileged to pursue education. In 1974, he founded Enonchong Memorial College, Besongabang. This was a secondary commercial college aimed for the education of the children of poor parents. Most of the students, for many years, benefited from a scholarship scheme Enonchong put in place.

¹⁹Che Helen Bih (Wife to Daniel Che, 76 years) in discussion with the author Che Street-Bamenda, 12/01/2017.

²⁰ Augustine Atabong (Pharmacist and Son to Michael Atabong, 57 years) in discussion with the author, Down beach- Limbe, 2nd /July/ 2021.

²¹Destiny Chambers Bamenda, Ref.:Destiny.Law/UN/OHCHR/NY/001/08/2015, 20th August 2015.

²²Ibid.

²³Sylvia Clarice Kilo, “Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo: A Window into His Life” (Memorial & Thanksgiving in Remembrance of Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo, Church of Resurrection Burtonville, April 29th 2017),4.

²⁴ Peter Saboh “Pa Mubang’s Kindness had no bounds”(Funeral Programme for Pa Fred Mubang 22nd April 1916-25 February 2000, Bamenda, March 2000), 29.

Albert Che Niba the CEO and founder of the famed Niba Automobile made giant strides to provide basic educational support at the primary, secondary and vocational levels to orphans and disabled children as well as seek employment opportunities for them. To realize this vision, Albert Che Niba established the Niba Foundation in 2004 as a non-profit making organization with the mission of contributing to the socio-economic development of the country through assistance to orphans and disabled children.²⁵ The sum of 1 billion FCFA was invested to develop the Centre of the foundation on a 20 hectare piece of land in Bawum- Bafut.²⁶ Michael Atabong was credited for providing financial assistance to sponsor the education of many underprivileged Bangwa children. He provided financial documents that helped many Bangwa children to travel and study in countries like Italy, U.S.A. and England. In Partnership with the Focolare Movement, Michael Atabong contributed significantly to the construction of the Seat of Wisdom College in Fontem. In fact, to make giving easy, Michael Atabong was often quoted to have said: “if you have a hundred francs and give out ten francs; what changes?” This revealed and encouraged his generosity.

Monangai on his part made educating children and giving opportunities to others a lifelong mission. Besides affording his own children the chance at higher education, he educated all his sister's kids, his cousins and in-laws and many others who he was not personally related to. He was also instrumental in granting financial documents and sponsorship to many to study abroad.²⁷ He funded and supported elementary education in many parts of the South West Province. According to Monangai, the secret to his success was in “wanting to be of service and to improve his community.”²⁸ He recognized what was a huge need and worked to provide the services to fulfil them. Paul Sinju the Tiko based business tycoon was known to have provided bank statements for practically any Tiko child that wanted to study abroad.²⁹ Again, to encourage learning, the Bamenda based business tycoon Peter Ngufor, for a couple of years provided scientific toys to Kindergarten learners in his native Bafanji Village.³⁰ This move was aimed at inspiring love for sciences.

6. FINANCING AND PATRONISING CHURCH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

In another perspective, indigenous entrepreneurs in Bamenda created social impact by reaching out to the community through the church. Christian churches and other religious bodies benefitted from their philanthropic activities which greatly contributed to the progress of the Christian church in Cameroon. Daniel N. Nangah was highly venerated for constructing a church building for the Roman Catholic mission worth several tens of millions at Njimafor.³¹ The structures realised in the 1970s consisted of a gigantic church building accompanied by other buildings to house the priests and other mission officials (see plate 1). Along with these structures, he also constructed a school and handed over to the Roman Catholic mission in the same locality.³² All these structures were worth over 50 million francs.³³ The impact of such a structure in a community at a time when schools were very limited can be imagined.

²⁵ Chris Mbunwe, “Verdzekov, Esua Dedicate Niba Albert Foundation” *Post News*, 24th May, 2005.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ William Ebohi Monangai (Indigenous Entrepreneur in Buea, aged 89 years) in discussion with the author, Bokwango- Buea, 02/2/2021.

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Saker Pride “Telling the Story and More” <http://www.sakerpride.com/almanac2.html>. Accessed 5/1/2021.

³⁰ Peter Ngufor (Commercial Entrepreneur and former worker of the Nangah company, 74 years) in discussion with the author, Mile 3 –Bamenda, 15th /10/2017.

³¹ William Tamo Nji (Retired Businessman aged 96 years) in discussion with the author Njimafor- Mbatu, 11/6/2017.

³² Idem.

³³ Idem.



Plate1. Roman Catholic Church Njimafor, Donated by D.A.Nangah

Source: Collected by Lambert Munang N., 5th /6/2017

Source: Collected by Lambert Munang N., 5th /6/2017

In another example, Frederick Mubang who was D.A. Nangah's God father, also largely distinguished himself in philanthropic activities towards the church. As a wealthy entrepreneur, he remarkably contributed to the progress of the Roman Catholic Church. He gave vast parcels of land to the Church both in big Mankon and in his native Mbatu village where he donated 3 hectares to the church at Njimafor.³⁴ He is said to have suggested to Bishop Paul Verzekov that a Cathedral be constructed in Big Mankon- Bamenda at a time when the bishop did not believe such a project could be realised because of financial constrains. To encourage the Bishop, he started by making a fabulous contribution towards the building of its foundation.³⁵ This ushered in the construction of the cathedral in the 1970s. That explains why, Frederick Mubang was greatly applauded by Catholics to have "placed the foundation stone of the cathedral at Big Mankon Bamenda."³⁶

Mubang's landmark philanthropic project to the church was the construction of MATER REDEMPTORIS (Meter Redemption Shrine) at Njangma just above his house. For this project, he donated 10 hectares of land to the church, and sponsored the building of huge statues depicting the 14 Stations of the Cross. The sculptors were hired from Italy. In all Frederick Mubang invested more than 300 million francs CFA in the project that was officially handed over to the church in December 1995.³⁷ The place rapidly became a pilgrimage destination where Christians from various parts of World visited during lent periods for spiritual retreats. His landmark contributions to the progress of the church impressed Pope John Paul II who conferred on him the "knight of St Gregory".³⁸ This was the highest rank a non clergy could hold in catholic circles.

Sylvester K. Kilo was also associated with ground breaking philanthropic gestures to the church. The Kilo Comprehensive College was later handed over to the Catholic education authorities. It was following this transfer of ownership that the name of the school was changed to St. Sylvester High School, with a dedicated Kilo library to honour his name. Again, Kilo's own private home called Hill top House overlooking the market at Mbve-Kumbo; one of the most beautiful of Kilo's constructions

³⁴Micheal Mubang (Businessman and Son to Fred Mubang, 50 years) in discussion with the author, Old Town – Bamenda, 13th/02/2017

³⁵Idem.

³⁶"Fred Tanyi Mubang: Brief Biography" (Funeral Programme for Fred Mubang, Bamenda, March 2000),24.

³⁷Micheal Mubang (Businessman and Son to Fred Mubang, 50 years) in discussion with the author, Old Town –Bamenda, 13th/02/2017

³⁸ Nicolas Ade Ngwa "Brief Tribute to Pa Fred Mubang" ((Funeral Programme for Fred Mubang, Bamenda, March 2000),26.

was later offered to the Catholic Church and was used for a Minor seminary by the Kumbo Diocese.³⁹ However, it is important to indicate here that, it was only after Kilo's death in 1977 that these properties were handed over to the church. In another example, Daniel Iyok the Proprietor and Managing Director of SAMCO Company limited was hailed for making outstanding contributions and patronising the building of Catholic Church Newtown, Limbe. He was also credited for his contributions in the construction of the Mamfe Cathedral, a project which his family continued to be involved with in his memory.⁴⁰ Daniel Iyok was equally acclaimed for patronising the Rotary club, Catholic Men's Association and many other religious groups.⁴¹ Albert Che Niba, the proprietor of the famous Niba Automobile was also associated with significant philanthropy to the church. He was credited for constructing and handing over a college to the Roman Catholic Church for free. This school went operational in 2005 and was named after him- St. Albert Comprehensive College, Bawum- Bafut.⁴² In another example, the Catholic Mission Church in Tiko was constructed with financial donations largely made by Michael Atabong and Paul Sinju who were all Tiko based business magnets in the 1970s.

In the early 1970s, S. P. Longla provided accommodation for a nascent Presbyterian congregation at his Longla Commercial College (LCC). This gave birth to the Longla Congregation of the P.C.C. The congregation progressed in lips and bounds to earn the name "Mighty Musang". Besides, S.P. Longla's philanthropy extended to his single handed construction of a church for the Presbyterians in his native Pinyin village precisely in his neighbourhood of Nkwindegli.⁴³ In another example, Charles Menyoli the proprietor of Fakoship Limited was applauded for contributing hugely in the construction of churches for the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon (PCC) especially in Fako. In Menyoli's words, "I know that all what I have acquired is God given. My contributions in the building of church houses make me happy. When the building is done and dedicated, I feel like I have done something. I see the church as a source of inspiration to us the people on earth..."⁴⁴ Though accused by some observers and analysts of still turning around and asking for compensation when he contributed to the building of a church, Menyoli in a famous interview maintained he believed that whatever you acquire on earth is God given. In his words:

Even the Bible says that one should give out ten percent of his or her earnings to the church. I don't think I can give ten percent of my income to the Church. I have never done it. The money I have is used for so many things. However, I endeavour to contribute to the growth of the Church. As I do it, I realise that I succeed the more and I am also happy.⁴⁵

7. DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING FACILITIES

Another significant impact created by indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon was linked to the development of housing facilities and other infrastructure in various cities and villages in Cameroon. Through their personal investments, indigenous entrepreneurs took the lead to embellish various communities with beautiful and spectacular structures. They invested in raising an avalanche of residential houses, hotels of various categories and school complexes. The Buea-based, internationally renowned business magnate, Charles Menyoli, after being in active business for over six decades, could boast of having constructed more than 40 houses in Buea and Limbe.⁴⁶ His structures hosted important services. For example, the 21st Infantry battalion was hosted in one of his structures. To address growing accommodation needs in the South west region, Menyoli engaged in the construction of low cost houses at the Bulu area in Buea. Besides, Menyoli was the proprietor of the famous

³⁹Sylvia Clarice Kilo, "Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo: A Window into His Life" (Memorial & Thanksgiving in Remembrance of Sylvester Kindzeka Kilo, Church of Resurrection Burtonville, April 29th 2017), 4.

⁴⁰Saker Pride, *Online Archive for Saker Baptist College*.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Chris Mbunwe, "Verdzekov, Esua Dedicate Niba Albert Foundation" *Post News*, 24th May, 2005.

⁴³Moses Tenengboh (Farmer and Elder in P.C.C. Menka, 65 years) in discussion with the author, Santa, 15/07/2017.

⁴⁴Charles Menyoli interviewed by Walter Wilson Nana

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Paul E. Kode "I Want To Wrap Up My Lifelong Achievements -Dr. Charles N. Menyoli's 2016 resolution"

Memos Hotel in Buea. The place of this hotel in the social strata of Buea is undisputed. Similarly, Paul Sinju, constructed and owned more than 60 houses in addition to two renowned hotels in Tiko and Limbe. He built the famous Airport Hotel to commemorate the Reunification of Cameroon in 1961 and it was to it that President Ahidjo retired, after his Mungo Bridge speech, for a lavish reception.⁴⁷ Both President Ahidjo and Vice President John Ngu Foncha had a great rapport with him, and Foncha would often visit him in Tiko.

In another example, S.K kilo who owned several real estate assets also significantly contributed in addressing accommodation problems in his society. He was an owner of several homes in Bamenda city, 4 homes in Limbe, a spectacular office structure at the commercial street in Bamenda, and the famed New City Hotel in the City of Bamenda. He equally had 4 petrol stations in the city of Bamenda and in Banso. Was an owner of vast lands in Nkwen, upstasion Bamenda (including the presidency in Bamenda).⁴⁸ He equally owned land and real estates in Buea. In Yaounde, he owned 2 spectacular buildings and an office at Avenue Kennedy.

Danial Awa Nangah's family residential edifice in Njimafor- Mbatu largely remained unbeatable in Bamenda. The structure was a perfect blend of beauty, ruggedness and an amazing display of creativity, quality and durability. Nangah was the proprietor of several residential and commercial buildings in Bamenda, Buea, Victoria, Yaounde and Douala.⁴⁹ The effervescence, added to the city of Bamenda by d. A. Nangah's Nangah Bakery, Ringway Hotel/Bar, and Skyline Hotel were remarkable. Nangah's famous Skyline Hotel, constructed in 1969 and classified as a 3 star hotel, took the lead in providing hotel, leisure, catering and recreational services in Bamenda and the entire North West Province. Nangah's personal structures erected in various cities in Cameroon served in hosting government services at a time when such structures were greatly lacking. A case in point was the customs building at Sonac Street-Bamenda. Equally, D.A. Nangah's personal building adjacent Food Market Bamenda, hosted the services of the Regional Delegation of the then National Education and later Secondary education for a very long time.⁵⁰



Plate2. Nangah's Compound At Njimafor

Source: Collected by Lambert Munang N, Njimafor, 15/02/2017

⁴⁷ Gabriel Sinju, (Businessman and son to Paul Sinju, 56 years), in discussion with the author, Down beach-Tiko, 2/ March/ 2021.

⁴⁸Charles Kilo (Businessman and son to S.K. Kilo, 46years) in Discussion with the author Foncha Street-Bamenda, 8th/12/2016.[

⁴⁹William Tamo Nji (Retired Businessman aged 96 years) in discussion with the author Njimafor- Mbatu, 11/6/2017.

⁵⁰Everistus Joko (Retired Youths and Sports Official, 68 years) in discussion with the author Old Town-Bamenda, 12/12/2016.

Plate 2 consists of photographs showing D.A. Nangah's Magnificent and rugged compound, constructed in the early 1970s at Njimafor- Bamenda. A and B portrays the back view while C shows the front view.

Samuel P. Longla was also outstanding in embellishing Bamenda and other communities with beauty through his several residential houses, Hotel and school complexes. This was equally true of William E. Monangai who extensively constructed residential houses in Buea. The investments made by these entrepreneurs in West Cameroon, earned them the names of major streets such as Monangai Quarters, Nangah Street, Nangah Junction, Che Street, Longla Street and Longla Junction and Samco Junction in Limbe. A vast quarter -Behind Che was named after D.N Che.

8. PATRONISING CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS/INITIATIVES

Culturally, indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon were people of great status and influence in their various cultural societies. Fon⁵¹ Mbinglo of Nso was customarily hosted in the Kilo household in Small Mankon "during his rare visits to Bamenda town." There was an apartment reserved for the Fon of Nso in Kilo's family house such that, whenever he was around, "his room would be warmed by fire lit in a head pan even in the hottest afternoons and the Nso community in Bamenda would gather to pay respect."⁵² Furthermore, his great influence in the nation earned him the traditional title and position of "Shey" in his native Nso. At that, there were only 4 "sheys" in Nso.⁵³ This title and position made him to be initiated into countless number of traditional societies in Nso and thus very influential in Nso land.

Indigenous entrepreneurs in many instances patronised the founding and functioning of village and ethnic cultural and development associations. For example, Henry Ndifor Enonchong the CEO and founder of Fresh Foods Cameroon, was the founder and patron of Manyu Elite Cultural and Development Association (MECA), Douala and a member of the MECA National Committee of elders. 1997, he was unanimously elected President of the Mamfe Central Chiefs Conference. Henry Ndifor Enonchong equally initiated the rice scheme, which was called the Tonkorong-Manyu Upland Integrated Rice Project in Manyu Division which radically transformed the economic status of numerous farmers in the locality.

Frederick Mubang played an active role in founding the Mbatu Cultural and Development Association (MBACUDA) and served as its treasurer for 10 years. This earned him traditional recognition. Fon Mungmaah II of Mbatu raised him to the rank of a sub chief (Mbangnizaah).⁵⁴ Daniel A. Nangah like Frederick Mubang was a founding father of Mbatu Cultural and Development Association. Through this association, he made remarkable financial contributions for the realisation of development projects in the village. While Mubang served as National Treasurer, Nangah served as home branch president.⁵⁵

In recognition of Nangah's laudable contributions to the development of his village of origin, he was made "Talah", the chief's adviser in Mbatu village.⁵⁶ He thus became very influential in traditional diplomacy and politics in Mbatu village. Similarly, in Nkwen, the business magnet Max Atanga also became a leading notable owing to the fact that he had in many ways champion the cultural, social and economic development of his village. He was appointed quarter head in a vast quarter that at that time stretched from Mile 3 Nkwen to Mobile Nkwen and Sicia Quarters. In fact, in terms of traditional authority and influence in Nkwen, he was next only to the Fon of Nkwen.⁵⁷ Michael

⁵¹ The word "Fon" is the ethnic equivalence of the English word "King" in the Bamenda Grassland in Cameroon.

⁵² Sylvia Clarice Kilo, "Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo: A Window into His Life" (Memorial & Thanksgiving in Remembrance of Sylvester Kindzeka Kilo, Church of Resurrection Burtonsville, April 29th 2017), 6.

⁵³ Charles Kilo (Businessman and son to S.K. Kilo, 46years) in Discussion with the author Foncha Street-Bamenda, 8th/12/2016.

⁵⁴ "Fred Tanyi Mubang: Brief Biography (Funeral Programme for Fred Mubang, Bamenda, March 2000), 24.

⁵⁵ William Tamo Nji (Retired Businessman aged 96 years) in discussion with the author Njimafor- Mbatu, 11/6/2017.

⁵⁶ Idem.

⁵⁷ George Atanga (Businessman and Grandson to Max Atanga Aged 55year) in discussion with the author, Bamenda, 16th /02/2017

Fomukong the proprietor of Reliance Commercial Enterprise in Limbe, played a crucial role as president of the Meta Cultural Development Association (MECUDA) in the 1980s. This made him to be designated as the first “Ntum Nfon”⁵⁸ by the chiefs in Meta.⁵⁹

Samuel P. Longla was equally reckoned with in his native Pinyin as a development catalyst who “championed every development initiative in his native Pinyin land ranging from founding the Pinyin Development Organisation, providing accommodation to the Pinyin women’s general meeting in Bamenda from 1970, orchestrating Mitayen Cooperative Credit Union (MITACUL). In MITACUL, S.P. Longla was the owner of account number 001, clear evidence of the pioneering role he played in kick starting the micro financial institution which eventually grew in lips and bounds and was reckoned with as one of the fastest growing credit unions in Cameroon. Daniel Iyok on his part championed the formation of South West Elites Association (SWELA) and equally took on many leadership positions in his community including the President of Bayang Association for Self Help (BASH), Nchang Development Organisation and Victoria club.⁶⁰ Through these positions, he made significant contributions to socio-cultural life.

Charles Menyoli over the years received a number of awards in recognition of his support to developmental initiatives and humanitarian works. One of such awards was received from the South West Elite Association (SWELA) in 2016. Menyoli was credited for building and equipping of the Bonduma traditional council hall in Buea. From all these illustrations, it is evident that indigenous entrepreneurs in West Cameroon played indispensable role in catalyzing the development of their respective villages and patronising village development Associations.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the social contributions of indigenous entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions coterminous with West Cameroon. The paper paid attention to the philanthropic activities of these entrepreneurs and the transformational benefits that accrued either to particular communities or to society at large. The findings revealed that, indigenous entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions coterminous with West Cameroon masterfully initiated and promoted far reaching social developments in their respective communities. They promoted the welfare of others, generally through charitable donations of funds and other valuable resources with the goal of creating positive public image for themselves, enhancing their relationships with clients and creating a positive work environment. This was through their efforts in the provision of social and infrastructural amenities, development of transport and other public infrastructure, enhancement of education for the less privileged, financing and patronising church projects and activities, development of low cost housing facilities, as well as in patronising cultural and development associations/ initiatives. These projects and facilities continued to be a blessing in various communities long after the entrepreneurs who donated them were gone. These indigenous entrepreneurs were therefore veritable instruments of far reaching social transformation.

INTERVIEWS

Amandoh , Zacheaus Ful. Retired social insurance worker and quarter Head for Ntemnifor quarter-Nkwen, 70 years. Foncha Street-Bamenda, 3rd Febuary2018

Atabong, Agustine. Pharmacist and Son to Michael Atabong, 57 years. Down beach- Limbe, 2nd /July/ 2020.

Atanga, George. Businessman and Grandson to Max Atanga, Aged 55years. Bamenda, 16th /02/2017

Che, Helen Bih .Wife to Daniel Che, 76 years. Che Street-Bamenda, 12/01/2017.

Joko, Everistus. Retired Youths and Sports Official, 68 years. Old Town-Bamenda, 12/12/2016.

Kilo, Charles. Businessman and son to S.K. Kilo, 46years. Foncha Street-Bamenda, 8th/12/2016.

Menyoli, Charles. Interviewed by Walter Wilson Nana

Monangai, William Ebobi. Indigenous Entrepreneur in Buea, aged 89 years. Bokwango- Buea, 02/2/2021.

⁵⁸“Ntum nfon” is a title in the Bamenda Grassland conferred to an elite officially chosen, decorated and deligated by traditional rulers as their mouth piece.

⁵⁹Saker Pride, *Online Archive for Saker Baptist College*.

⁶⁰Ibid.

- Mubang, Micheal. Businessman and Son to Fred Mubang, 50 years. Old Town –Bamenda, 13th/02/2017
- Ngiah, Caroline. Retired Health Worker and Niece of D.A. Nangah, 61 years, Njimafor-Mbatu village, 15/06/2017.
- Nji, William Tamo. Retired Businessman aged 96 years. Njimafor- Mbatu, 11/6/2017.
- Ngong, Peter. Builder and nephew of D.A. Nangah, 55 years. Old Town Bamenda, 10/07/2017.
- Ngufor Ngufor. Commercial Entrepreneur and former worker of the Nangah company, 74 years. Mile 3 – Bamenda, 15th /10/2017.
- Sinju, Gabriel. Businessman and son to Paul Sinju, 56 years, in discussion with the author, Down beach- Tiko, 2/ March/ 2021.
- Tamambang, Bridget. Teacher, Daughter to Mofor, aged 61 years. Azire-Bamenda, on 28th November 2017.
- Tenengboh, Moses. Farmer and Elder in P.C.C. Menka, 65 years.Santa, 15/07/2017.

MAGAZINES, NEWS PAPERS AND FUNERAL BOOKLETS

- Ade, Ngwa Nicolas. “Brief Tribute to Pa Fred Mubang”. Funeral Programme for Fred Mubang, Bamenda, March 2000.
- “Biography of S.P. Longla”. Commemorating and Celebrating the Life of Pa S.P. Longla, Bamenda, November 2016.
- Destiny Chambers Bamenda, Ref.:Destiny.Law/UN/OHCHR/NY/001/08/2015, 20th August 2015.
- “Fred Tanyi Mubang: Brief Biography”. Funeral Programme for Fred Mubang, Bamenda. March 2000.
- Kilo, Sylvia Clarice, “Sylvester Kinzeka Kilo: A Window into His Life”. Memorial & Thanksgiving in Remembrance of Sylvester Kindzeka Kilo, Church of Resurrection Burtonsville, April 29th 2017.
- Kode, Paul E. “I Want To Wrap Up My Lifelong Achievements –Dr. Charles N. Menyoli’s 2016 resolution”
- Mbunwe, Chris. “Verdzekov, Esua Dedicate Niba Albert Foundation” *Post News*, 24th May, 2005.
- Saboh, Peter. “Pa Mubang’s Kindness had no bounds”. Funeral Programme for Pa Fred Mubang 22nd April 1916-25 Febuary 2000, Bamenda, March 2000.
- Saker Pride “Telling the Story and More” <http://www.sakerpride.com/almanac2.html>. Accessed 5/1/2021.

BOOKS

- Fanso, V.G. *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges Vol.2*. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1989.
- Munang, Lambert N. ‘Indigenous Entrepreneurs in Bamenda, 1939-1991 : Emergence and Contributions’ M.A. Dissertation in History, The University of Bamenda, 2018.
- Ngoh, Victor Julius. *History of Cameroon Since 1800*. Limbe: Presbook, 1996.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY



Lambert Ngong Munang, is an educator with one and a half decade experience of serving in public academic institutions in Cameroon. He is equally a PhD Research Fellow in the History Department of The University of Bamenda, Cameroon. He specializes in Economic and Social History with special interest in Entrepreneurial History.

Citation: Lambert Ngong Munang. "Social Contributions of Indigenous Entrepreneurs in the North West and South West Regions Coterminous with West Cameroon, 1962-2016" *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, vol 9, no. 3, 2022, pp. 117-128. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0903010>.

Copyright: © 2022 Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.