

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

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DE LA FEMME ET DE LA FAMILLE



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace-Work-Fatherland

MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
AND THE FAMILY

38TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN CAMEROON

THEME

**FOR AN INCLUSIVE DIGITAL WORLD:
INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR
GENDER EQUALITY**

Terms of Reference

1. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

International Women's Day (IWD) has its origins in the 20th century with the labour struggles and feminist protests for women's right to vote, better working conditions and equality between male and female citizens. Taking into consideration the coherent link between these demands and humanitarian and development issues, the international community has made this day an important instrument for raising awareness and advocating for the improvement of the situation of women in all areas.

Indeed, thanks to the four world conferences on women organised by the United Nations (Mexico 1975; Copenhagen 1980; Nairobi 1985; Beijing 1995), gender equality has become a core issue in global agendas on development. One of the decisive steps in this United Nations' commitment dates back to 1975 with the celebration of the very first IWD, decided during the First World Conference on Women in Mexico. The said conference resulted in (i) the Mexico Declaration on gender equality and their contribution to development and peace; (ii) the Action Plan to achieve the objectives of the International Women's Year.

In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution instituting IWD on 8 March. Since 1986, Cameroon is taking part in the event with great interest. Actually, the liberalisation of public life and democratisation which constitute part of the innovations of the 1980s in Cameroon go hand in hand with policies that promote equality and are based on strategic development planning frameworks. Among these frameworks, there is the National Development Strategy 2020-2030 (NDS30), which is in line with Cameroon's Development Vision by 2035 and the Head of State's asserted will to improve the situation of women in our country.

IWD thus represents the international community's commitment to social justice and protection of human rights for development and peace, but also, the States' willingness to definitely create the conditions for the participation of all in citizenship and the expression of human rights.

2. CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

For this 38th edition, Cameroon has adopted the theme retained by the United Nations, namely: **"For an Inclusive Digital World: Innovation and Technologies for Gender Equality"**. It is aligned with the priority theme of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), **"Innovation, Technological Change and Education in the Digital Age to achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls"**.

This year's edition is organised in a context marked by:

- continuation of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Beijing Platform for action;

- implementation of the very high directives of the Head of State regarding the alignment with digital economy (message to the youth on 10 February 2016);
- continued implementation of the Cameroon Development Vision by 2035, the National Development Strategy 2020-2030, especially its forecasts relating to the promotion and protection of women's rights such as female leadership and the empowerment of women, youths and socially vulnerable persons;
- the fight against anti-social conduct and the use of social networks for the purposes of political propaganda and/or dissemination of hate speech, of behaviours and images that are contrary to ethics and human dignity, to peace, children's rights and to life;
- strengthening of measures that promote the equitable access of all to digital economy;
- continuous management of the constraints related to the humanitarian and security crisis in some regions of the country.

Considered as the bedrock of digital technology, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are undeniable tools for socio-economic promotion and development. In effect, digitalisation helps in increasing productivity, in reducing the operational costs, in analysing data automatically, in developing new communication skills, in promoting innovations within companies. As such, digital economy provides new possibilities for the empowerment of women through job and training (e-learning) opportunities, as well as e-commerce.

According to the 2022 *Mobile Gender Gap Report* from the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSMA), women's access to mobile Internet is still very poor in countries with low revenues. This is justified among other things by women's poor literacy and digital skills, the high costs of mobile telephones and the unsafe use of the Internet. The report states that *"women are 7% less likely to possess a mobile telephone than men, and 15% less likely to own a smartphone; 234 million women less than men have access to mobile Internet. Women use the Internet 15% less often than men"*.

In Cameroon, despite the initiatives taken by the Government, development partners and the civil society, the integration of women and girls in the ICT sectors or professions is still low. Consequently, the use, appropriation and mastery of the challenges of digital tools is an area where major disparities between women and men prevail. Furthermore, observation of the society reveals the harmful effects of the perverse use of ICTs and digital technology, which seem to give leeway to violence against women and girls, to the point of tarnishing their image and dignity.

It is therefore essential to fill these gaps and fight against these scourges, not only by improving women and girls access to digital technology, but above all by educating them and building their capacities to make beneficial use of these

technological innovations in order to stimulate growth, boost their economic activities and foster their empowerment.

It is specifically to support women and girls in these digital changes that the Government and its partners are implementing various initiatives, including:

- projects and programmes aimed at reducing the digital gender gap;
- the Project to Accelerate Digital Transformation in Cameroon (PATNIC);
- the promotion of the culture of digitalisation;
- the dissemination of ICTs;
- the development of programmes encouraging the women and girls to develop interest in digital technologies;
- support for women's digital start-ups;
- the fight against the harassment of young girls on social media;
- the project on the national charter for online protection of children;
- the establishment of Women and Family Empowerment Centres (WFECs) throughout the country, which provide women and girls with skills in entrepreneurship, setting-up and management of projects, with a particular focus on ICTs;
- linking women to the digital economy, by gradually setting up "digital houses" in the WFECs with the support of the "Orange-Cameroun" Foundation;
- granting subsidies and agro-pastoral equipment to women living in rural areas and training them in modern techniques of production, processing, conservation, conditioning and packaging of their products;
- the Central African Backbone project with a sub-component on "support for women's empowerment";
- the training of women and girls in the use of ICTs in partnership with the African Institute of Computer Science (IAI)

The theme of the 38th edition of the IWD therefore calls for reflection on gender inequalities in the digital domain. On the one hand, it is a way of ensuring full and equal access to digital technology for all; on the other hand, it is a way of using innovation and digital technologies to empower women and girls; all of which calls for the need to protect their rights in the cyberspace, to fight against online violence, so that they can participate effectively in development. In a nutshell, the theme of the 38th IWD requires to increase the awareness of all social strata to the proper use of transformative digital technologies.

In order for ICTs to play an increasing role in the country's development, it is absolutely necessary for all the components of the society to take part in the conception, appropriation and mastery of these strategic tools.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1. General objective

Promote equal and responsible access of women and girls to digital technologies.

3.2. Specific objectives

- Strengthen women and girls' capacities to the proper use of ICTs ;
- enhance the fight against violence on women and girls in the cyberspace;
- sensitise the general public on the responsible use of social media ;
- popularise the benefits of digital technologies in all sectors ;
- acknowledge the contribution of ICTs and technological innovations in the empowerment of women and girls ;
- popularise the rights of women and girls in the ICT domain ;
- increase women and girls' access to technological innovations;
- support start-ups of women in the digital domain.

4. EXPECTED RESULTS

- Women and girls are empowered on the proper use of ICTs ;
- the fight against violence on women and girls in the cyberspace is enhanced;
- the general public is sensitised on the responsible use of social media ;
- the benefits of digital technologies are popularised in all sectors ;
- the contribution of ICTs and technological innovations in the empowerment of women and girls is acknowledged ;
- women's rights in the domain of ICT are popularised ;
- women and girls' access to technological innovations is increased;
- support is provided to start-ups of women in the digital domain.

5. SUB-THEMES

- Inclusive digitilisation and sustainable development
- Digital inclusion and women's empowerment
- Gender equality and digital transformation
- Technological innovation and gender equality
- Women and digital economy
- Women and social media
- Responsible use of digital technology
- Women and ICT sectors/professions
- ICT and social rights;
- Digital world and violence
- Role of communities in the fight against violence on women
- Promotion and protection of women and girls' rights
- ICT and family cohesion
- ICT and women's health
- Gender-Based Violence
- Images of women and girls in the media

- Social media and legislation
- Social media and peace

6. ACTIVITIES

- Launching of activities
- Media communication
- Educative talks, conferences, round table and debates
- Socio-legal clinics
- Sports, cultural and recreative activities
- Training and other capacity-building sessions
- Trade fairs
- Health activities
- Awareness-raising campaigns and caravans
- Open door days
- Parades, etc..

7. METHODOLOGY

The 38th edition of the IWD will hold in two phases, including a preparatory phase and a phase dedicated to celebration across the national territory.

The preparatory phase will consist in the drafting of terms of reference that will give general directives for the celebration. In a concerted manner, a national programme and harmonised local programmes will be developed, taking into account the activities of institutional and social partners. Partners will freely carry out their activities using their resources. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family will provide them with technical support upon request and according to the means available. The media's contribution will be needed for a better social appropriation of the event. Radio and television programmes, as well as round table discussions and educative talks will include national languages, in order to integrate men and women from all cultural backgrounds. The national launching of the event will be done by the Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family in a locality agreed upon with the social and institutional partners. Launchings are equally planned at local levels under the coordination of local administrative authorities.

The celebration will take place on 8 March 2023 throughout the country. It will be marked by parades of women from different socio-professional backgrounds, networks, women's associations and other legally existing associative groups.

The events marking the celebration of the 38th edition of the IWD should take place with strict respect for the institutions and ideals of the Republic, human dignity and patriotism.

A general report of the celebration will be drafted 15 days after the celebration.