

Digital Communication Catalyzing Participatory Development Between the Diaspora and Home-Based Cameroonians

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Abstract

One of the manifestations of globalization is the massive movements and migrations of people across the world in search of life opportunities for integral development, facilitated by new technologies and communication media. However, such movements are basically unidirectional, from the global south to the northern block. The rise of a hybrid generation with a vast socio-cultural exposure fosters a unique kind of communication and participatory development that can overcome the conceptual and operational shortcomings of the previous developmental designs in sub-Saharan Africa. This essay seeks to explore how the emerging global communication platforms can enhance sustainable development in Cameroon; the effectiveness of the developmental initiatives by Cameroonians in diaspora; and the factors that contribute to failed developmental initiatives in Cameroon—in view of finding an appropriate developmental model that taps the possibilities of global participation while upholding Cameroon's socio-cultural heritage. It employed case study of the German-founded non-profit organization, Life Education and Health Alliance e. V. (LEHA), working in Cameroon. Data was mined from other secondary sources as well as unstructured interview with the officials and beneficiaries of LEHA. The research is based on the participation and globalization theories. The results showed that globalization is a pervasive trend to be leveraged for sustainable development; Cameroon's administrative incompetencies and bad governance are root causes of stagnation and failed developmental efforts; LEHA possesses dual socio-cultural experiences and profiles, and in collaboration with reliable home-based partners, can leverage the digital communication avenues to upscale sustainable development projects for Africa. Recommendations are made for the sanitization of the administrative machinery of the Cameroonian Government that would accommodate diaspora engagement and participation in Cameroon's development landscape.

Keywords:

African, Communication, Development, Diaspora, LEHA e. V., Model, Tatum.



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Introduction

Globalization is plausible in the movement of people across the world in search of life opportunities for integral development. However, such movements are basically unidirectional, from the south to the north; from Africa, Asia and Latin America to Europe and America. Since globalization is also driven by communication, information flow is largely and conversely from the North to the South (Guana & Guanah, 2018). Most African youth have come to believe that they can only succeed by going to the West, thus they undergo dangerous routes by sea, or desert land to arrive at Europe or America. They are escaping from wars and poverty caused by political regimes, whereby corruption and nepotism bars the youth from growth opportunities irrespective of their talents, education and hard work (Carbone, 2017). If the youth can venture into such dangerous trips, it could be argued that the predicament haunting them in their home-Countries is more life-threatening.

Africans who have visited or relocated to the West possess a hybrid of exposure, knowledge and experience; they have first-hand insight and understanding of the African reality and that of the Western culture. If development communication entails political participation and change; if the Marshall Plan failed in Africa because the design and implementation was void of African socio-cultural insight, then, the hybrid population, Africans in diaspora, stand a better chance of finding the right financial, human, cultural and material insight, processes and above all, the project ideas that can be sustainable and impactful. Diasporas are defined as “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland,” by force or voluntarily. It consists of “people settled far from their ancestral homelands,” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2014). They are also referred to as “trans-national community” (Bravo, 2015). The Africans in diaspora, like anyone who crosses cultural frontiers, undergoes the challenging psycho-social process; such as language barriers, discrimination, failure to recognize home-earned certificates, etc. (Ouchou, & Williams, 2019). On this note, the attitudes of Africans in diaspora towards the native Countries differ from rejection of home, assimilation of the entire western culture, rejection of the Western culture or integration of the cultures of the native and host Country. Consequently, whatever dimension an African takes when encountering other cultures, their approach and analyses of life situation cannot be the same like those who have not had such exposures. Sometimes, the African governments and people back home develop inferiority complex and come to consider the diaspora too radical or too high for collaboration or consultation. A country like Cameroon that does not admit of dual citizenship to Cameroonians in diaspora may be rooted in such feelings of insecurity. Of course, some diasporans really become quite haughty and look down on the people and home initiatives, creating a psychological rift.

The new power dynamic between Cameroonians who have moved to the West (*bushfallers* in Cameroonian jargons) and those who have remained at home, is also being upset by the communication media. Formerly, the *bushfallers* could ostensibly distinguish themselves by their dressing style, car models, accent, etc. Global communication and social media are making it possible even for those at home to source and purchase these brands of facilities (if they can), adopt the social behavioural style or mannerisms of

Western Stars, or “follow” them online and imbibe Western ideologies and trends. Thus, the critical difference between the *bushfaller* and the home resident living in Cameroon lies in the real-world systems and level of development of social facilities, public administration functionality, and availability and access to opportunities in the socio-economic and political arena in Cameroon.

Life Education and Health Alliance (LEHA e. V.) is a hybrid non-profit organisation with both German and Cameroonian human and financial resources. LEHA was founded within the context of the Cameroon Anglophone crisis, which unfortunately targeted the educational system by ordering school closure, kidnapping, molesting and killing teachers and educational stakeholders. As a result, every teacher had to be on the run for safety. Education for mission schools and a few other private schools permitted by the secessionist movement in anglophone Cameroon, runs under strict conditions and are short of qualified teachers. By the academic year 2023, only 61.5 percent of schools (3,900 out of 6,351) reopened amid attacks on educational facilities and teachers. (Austrian Red Cross, ACCORD 2024). LEHA recognized the resilience of the children, parents and teachers and sought to promote holistic education of youth as a non-negotiable stake for development, even in the midst of these crises.

This essay explores the use of global communication that favours effective education of children in Cameroon as well as LEHA’s educational vision as a cutting-edge model in the domain of development communication for Cameroon. The indispensable role of social media, but also inter-personal communication enhances the efficacy of sustainable development.

Statement of the Problem

The European missionaries who came to the North West Region of Cameroon between the 1920s and 1930s invested in education, not only by constructing structures, but also by sponsoring the education of needy children. The Mill Hill Missionaries and the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis who came from South Tyrol (Italy) to Grassfield Cameroon by the 1930s, for example, facilitated the twining of families in the two countries for educational sponsorship. There are families in grass-field Cameroon that were educated entirely by individuals in South Tyrol, overseen by these missionaries, using postal mail correspondence as the sole means of communication. This model of sponsorship still exists today by Tyrolean NGOs such as Etica Mundi, but most of the beneficiaries fail to continue the chain on empowering younger generations, minding their businesses after graduating. Many sponsored children evolved in life, but others adopted a dependency syndrome, desiring to be bottle-fed for life. This category did not understand that a development initiative is meant to catapult sustainable social change and lend the beneficiaries wings to fly (Abdulquadir, Abdulkadir, Yahya, Zubair, 2024). Parents in Anglophone Cameroon actually have been prioritizing education of their children as the Government opened schools in the villages at affordable costs. However, children lack educational counselling to identify the right career path, coupled with the great quest for white collar jobs, which are not readily available after their graduation. Additionally, the youth lack the media literacy skills to effectively utilize the internet nowadays to exploit local resources and opportunities for their empowerment (Aduloju, 2020)

From a broader spectrum, the investments made by foreign and local NGOs and Governments (Ogunmola, 2015) to trigger development in Africa have not always borne the desired fruits because of the unsupportive socio-cultural ecosystem, which manifests in dependency mindset, illogical ambitions for economic growth, conflicts and wars, corrupt political systems, educational curriculum incompatible with social realities, etc. Educational investments, therefore, do not commensurate poverty reduction in Africa as 46% of Africans are still estimated to live below extreme poverty line of \$2.15 a day (Statistica, 2025) through the literacy rate shows growing trends Today, many Cameroonian youth have one dream—to migrate to Europe, America or the Middle East in search of job opportunities and better living conditions (Kindzeka, 2024) even if most of them lack the economic means to actually evacuate (Fofack & Adenkung, 2020). Despite the unfriendly immigration crackdown in the US within the second tenure of its president Donald Trump, African youth continue to scout for jobs elsewhere as job advertisement are brandished on the media from other parts of the world (Kindzeka, 2024). The massive migration of Cameroonian youth is argued to create a professional vacuum in the Country, causing a brain drain and cultural dislocation on one hand, even though it triggers expansion of cultural horizons among the migrant communities left behind and the host communities on the other hand (Dimitrova & Downing, 2024).

Within this complex landscape, this essay explores not only reasons for the stagnation of development in Cameroon, but alternatives for sustainable development breakthroughs, focusing on the vision and use of social media by a small German non-profit organisation, Life Education and Health Alliance e. V.

Review of Related Literature

This section explores the existing literature in the various aspects of development communication from historical overview to the present-day context of globalization.

Historical Evolution of Development in Africa

The history of development in Africa has led some researchers to wonder if Africa would have carved its unique development model if the Westerners had not intervened. The construction of the pyramids in Egypt is an example often cited of how Africa could develop based on her own culture, finding solutions to her unique problems and making life better using its available resources. Development is understood as a “social condition within a nation, in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems” (Mfondo & Afanji, 2014, p 5). This definition entails that:

“social groups have access to organizations; basic services such as education, housing, health services, and nutrition, and above all else, that their cultures and traditions are respected; ... there are employment opportunities, satisfaction at least of basic needs, the achievement of a positive rate of distribution and redistribution of national wealth; and that governmental systems have legitimacy not only in terms of the law, but also in terms of providing social benefits for the majority of the population (Mfondo & Afanji, 2014, p 5).

Apart from the above-mentioned cases of the unique building architecture in North Africa, documentation of evolution in the African life style prior to Western influence is rare.

The Western-conceived communication over the years, has portrayed the African life style as primitive, not just because it was different, but because it was deficient in social facilities and opportunities, too labour-intensive and consequently, too slow and non-scientific (Abdulquadir et al, 2024). For example, people could trek for months for long distances like from the Cameroon Grassfield to Yola, Calabar or Port Harcourt in Nigeria for commercial purposes, carrying their merchandise on their heads or backs. They wouldn't use automobile not only because they couldn't afford, but because there were no motorable roads linking these commercial towns yet. The Germans, first colonial masters in Cameroon from 1884 to 1916, are known for having enforced hard labour on the people to dig their roads. Other changes brought to bear on the African lifestyle included wearing of clothes, building of houses, feeding styles, etc. Education method and content also expanded from home-based on cultural values and life skills to mass education in institutions with a wide variety of subjects. Since movement was limited in the past, the people's knowledge of neighbouring areas was also quite limited, and anything that appeared unfamiliar, straying in their area was supposed to be destroyed or captured and brought to the Chief to determine its fate. This included human beings who could come around speaking a different language or having a different skin colour. Every civilization might have followed this primitive trajectory, but the case of Africa is exceptional due to stronger and long-lasting external influence. The stiff resistance against the Europeans and the America penetration was not only because they were different, but because they were found destroying or capturing their brothers and sisters to a land of no-return.

Colonialism and missionary interactions gradually minimized such hostilities, but each race remained alien to the other. The Westerners had to enforce their way of life to civilize and develop the Africans, considered as underdeveloped because they had no better houses, hygienic conditions, travel facilities, educational, governance, healthcare or legal system. The mistake that stifled Africa's development till date and took their soul away was the condemnation of everything African (Brunce, Franks, & Paterson, 2017). Even after independence in the 1960s, the western media continued to be used as a tool for enforcing Western values on Africa (Nye, 2025), portrayed as civilized, developed, enjoyable and impeccable.

The media, based on the cultivation theory, was used to expose Africans to the Western culture, intending to spur developmental change in the African mentality, lifestyle and structures. The New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) and the dominant communication paradigm converged with the objective of transforming Africa through the media (Inyang, Alegu, & Maku, 2020). However, this model was criticized for identifying the Western culture with modernism and the African cultures with underdevelopment, just like the Marshal Plan that failed to consider the socio-cultural elements in Africa. Subordinating the African systematically to economic dependency was the insidious strategy that most onlookers could not guess. What has been visible was the disbursement of funds in donation and loans to Africa without the desired lifestyle improvement for more than a century. Conversely, the exploitation of natural resources from Africa at very low cost by the West and their African allies is a narrative, not

popularly mediatized. What requires the critical mind to understand is that despite Western development aid to Africa, their capitalist system strongly works in favour of keeping Africa underdeveloped for the benefit of the West; for example, “export of primary commodities from Africa very cheap and import of manufactured goods into Africa” at cut-throat prices (Leys 1996, p 46; Nwudo, Ezeaka, Anusiaonwu, 2018).

Considering that Africa is not isolated, but part of the global network, operating within the constraints of a mega socio-economic and political system of domination and dependency, Africa cannot write its own script for development despite the critical voices both in the West and in Africa against Western imperialism (Elvine, 2021). The 2008 global economic crisis has continued to raise an outcry among Western funders and African beneficiaries about the depleted aid sources in the West. Developmental initiatives in Africa that have been singly sustained by Western aids packages are at the verge of extinction, adding to the long history of abandoned developmental projects in Africa.

Africa’s under-development is not solely caused by Westerners’ maneuvers. As an endogenous factor, the ongoing socio-political armed conflict in Anglophone Cameroon is a palpable example of the contribution of inter-ethnic, interreligious or socio-political crisis razing the meager developmental initiatives into flames. Ten years of armed conflict have been more than enough to stagnate every developmental project by the Government, international or private bodies (Bang & Balgah, 2022) and making budding towns like Bamenda, Kumbo, Mamfe, Belo, Tatum, etc, look like ancient ruins. Another example is the Cardiac Center of St. Elizabeth Catholic General Hospital Shisong, that upscaled healthcare for the population in Cameroon and Central/West Africa that has been compromised as neither specialized health personnel nor cardiac patients from other Countries can afford to visit the site due to the insecurity and exploitation on the road meted by the State military and the separatist fighters alike (Annual Report 2023). This scenario leads to the inevitable question of what else should be done for Africa or better still, what should Africa do for itself given that sustainable development is better generated by the locals who are at the same time, globalized by new communication technologies (Oopen & Willner, 2006).

International Migration as enhancers of Development in Cameroon

The regulations about border crossing or residence in another country depend on the diplomatic relations among the countries. However, despite the laws in place, networks for clandestine and illegal entries are getting stronger and more sophisticated, trafficking capital and human beings. Globally, migration remains a complex phenomenon, triggered by several internal and external factors. The 2017 UN Report showed a tremendous rise globally from 173 million in 2000, 2020 million in 2010 to 258 million in 2017. The same report documented migrations in Asia at 40.7 million, Africa at 14.7 million, Latin America and the Caribbean at 12.9 million, Europe at 11.6 million, Northern America, 1.2 million and Oceania at 700,000 (United Nations, 2017). In 2024, an average of 100 youth Cameroonians were estimated to leave the Country daily (Kindzeka, 2024). The current unfriendly foreign policy in the US will only increase the influx into other countries rather than deter the youth from this outing ambition. The reasons for the massive migrations of youth are multifarious, but a few general ones are worth-noting:

In search of opportunities for education and economic growth like jobs, better living conditions, which through the media, have been seen to exist in these destinations (Kindzeka, 2024; Allie, Christensen, Grossman & Weinstein; 2021).

They search for political and psychological freedom, an environment that can value their talents and expertise while allowing them to pursue their life dreams, express themselves freely and enable them grow and impact humanity; a place of free and fair competition and meritocracy. Most Cameroonian youth have not experienced the process of applying for a job, being called for interview and finally being announced as “selected”. Most of these processes in civil life are weakened by corruption and bribery. Mbofung (2022, p 1) asserts that “there is no sector that is not infected by corruption: the army, customs, police, justice, national education, health services, public transport, public markets, the media, the electoral process, the civil service and the private sectors...relationship between the administration and individuals, and between individuals themselves”.

Conversely, the youth are escaping from socio-political systems that restrict educational, political participation and career opportunities. Civil life in Cameroon and other African Countries is marred by weak institutions, corruption and bribery; for example, admission into important institutes of learning, recruitment or employment processes are hardly free of bribes and favoritism (Fofack & Akendung, 2020; Roger, 2021). The youth therefore flee from a system that holds no future for them, but makes them feel repeatedly cheated and used. They are escaping from wars that have issued from bad governance.

Some youth, however, migrate legally and freely for education, jobs or to join the rest of their family already resident in the West (Fofack & Akendung, 2020).

Even though the ties of those in diaspora with the home country differ from person to person (Bravo, 2015), a link is established between the host and the country of origin, shrinking distances and expanding cultural and economic horizons among the communities of origin and the host communities (Dimitrova & Downing, 2024; Christensen, Grossman & Weinstein; 2021).

The migrant becomes the representative, the diplomat through their mediated and personal communication with the two cultures. Relationships widen, and the circle becomes bigger, dynamizing global communication (Fofack & Akendung, 2020). The Cameroonian diaspora supports developmental projects in their villages considerably. Yet there have been cases where the projects did not materialize, and the funds could not be accounted for. Of course, money is not all that is needed for the implementation of development initiatives, human capacity, cultural adaptability and other resources count.

Factors Contributing to Failed Development Initiatives in Cameroon

Africa has been described as the grave yard of various development initiatives since its independence in the 1960s. A failed project is that which “does not meet its goals within the defined timeframe, resources and requirements” (Mfondo, 2024). The rise of participatory development in the 1960s stimulated numerous local initiatives by governments and non-governmental agencies. However, the sites of unfinished buildings (personal or communal) all over Cameroon, for example, is indicative of unsustainable development mentality. Despite the numerous IMF and World Bank loans as well as

donations from foreign governmental and non-governmental agencies for development, many projects failed to succeed for internal or external reasons; such as:

Mismatched project priorities

Some projects have been mistargeted due to misinterpretation of feasibility indicators or other instinctive and ambitious drives. The conspicuous incomplete CPDM secretariat building in Tobin Kumbo-Bui Division of the North West Region, ambitiously set up after the foundation of the party in 1985, has only served as a hideout and safe haven for thieves, prostitutes and street children. There are many such structures as schools, health facility and markets constructed without a commensurate purpose or expressed need by the users. These have become wrong projects for the wrong people in the wrong places, a pure waste of resources.

Corruption in the project cycle

As bribery and corruption have eaten into the fabric of the society, hardly does anything fit in its correct place (Mfondo, 2024; Roger, 2021). Officials are bribed to enroll particular projects into the national development agenda for various selfish reasons. Developmental and funding opportunities are trapped and directed according to judgement of the officials, not necessarily according to the needs on the ground. Contractors bribe to be awarded contracts, and the percentages of funding are allocated to public officials along the hierarchy. Finally, the actual amount invested into the project is far too small to carry any substantial work, which ends up being unsustainable or poorly executed. Of course, the communication around the project becomes as flawed as the facts. It is wondered if there is any follow up and supervision through reading project reports and tracking down inconsistencies for rectification because no one gets impeached for misappropriating funds or for poor contract execution. Corruption is directly related to development as it “erodes trusts, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequalities, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis.” (Evine, 2024, p.71)

Lack of competence in project management

Even though the Ministry of Plan, Economy and Regional Development that manages government-funded projects is improving in capacity building for project management, the situation is still far from satisfactory. There are cases of poor communication among project partners, mismanagement of resources, poor supervision, etc. This leaves development initiatives incomplete or with lapses in communicational, technical, infrastructural and political stakes (Mfondo, 2024, Evine, 2024).

Lack of stakeholder engagement

Local stakeholders or beneficiaries are the project carriers and sustainers. Failure to engage them in all the phases of the project leaves loopholes because it is perceived as an initiative of the elite or local government officials. The role of development communication in this case is to engage stakeholders, making them more participative. Whether a project is conceived by local stakeholders or not, they have to be invited to partake in its design, implementation and use so that sustainability and relevance are guaranteed (Oopen & Willner, 2006; Avine, 2024). The disconnect between local

stakeholders and project holders is clearly noticed when the population is being “pressurized” to utilize a newly created market, for example.

Conflicts and wars

The Boko Haram insurgency in North Cameroon and the socio-political crisis in the Anglophone Regions have destroyed the existing facilities and made it impossible to initiate any development initiative. The two regions have regressed and deteriorated. Without socio-political and economic stability, no development initiative can be undertaken (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Evine, 2024).

The above factors could be remedied by good governance, characterized by transparency, accountability, participation, justice and meritocracy, which are central to project sustainability. It is the center piece that holds other stakes of development together. Additionally, scaling up communication among development stakeholders can mitigate risks (Mfondo & Afanji, 2014).

LEHA's Unique Character and Development Communication Package in Cameroon

LEHA e.V is a German non-profit Organisation, founded on May 22, 2022 by a medical doctor, Lawong Gilbert, a German, born in Kuila-Memfu, Cameroon. The Organisation was founded at the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in a full-scale war that exacerbated the fragile situation for the poor populations around the world. Coupled with the “neglected” socio-political crisis in English-Speaking Cameroon which ordered school shutdown, Lawong, reflected that, “keeping children and youths away from school since 2016 will not solve the problem, but prepare the youths for a life in poverty and anguish. “We therefore advocate for education as the best investment in our future” (Lawong, 2022). The aim of LEHA is to build a network of individuals and institutions to effect system-relevant development through youth education. The Executive Board lives in and operates from Germany in close collaboration with the Cameroonian-based teams to accompany the beneficiaries. The local staff of LEHA is continuously trained on good governance values; such as transparency, equal opportunities, timeliness, and social justice, etc. LEHA's definition of its values, mission and objectives is targeted to come alive in its every operation. These values equally filter into their communication model characterized by symmetrical exchange among the beneficiaries and with the LEHA teams, monthly administrative reports and briefings between the German-and Cameroon-based collaborators, joint online (and offline) meetings among the beneficiaries and the LEHA teams, trimestral site visits to the beneficiaries by the program coordinator. All of these make provision for checks and balances as monitoring and evaluation is ongoing so that conflicts or any arising challenges can be resolved (Oepen & Willner, 2006). These interactions are so effective, thanks to the social media platforms, especially WhatsApp and Google Meet. The program is so organized that the sponsored youth come to understand and assume their rights and duties in the Organisation. For example, they are free to call and signal of any academic or personal challenges, which enables the organisation to offer the necessary coaching and counselling to enable the children stay focused on the studies in order to succeed. Additionally, the movement of the youth during holidays is reported to the program coordinator for continuous accompaniment.

Since the creation of LEHA e.V., the number of children enrolled in the sponsorship program were as follows:

Year	College	Professional School	University	Collaborating Institutions	Total
2022-2023	135	3	0	7	138
2023-2024	130	7		8	138
2024-2025	132	8	2	10	152
2025-2026	158	12	6	10	176

Table 1: Compiled from LEHA's Annual Reports

LEHA's Diaspora Character Offers an Engaging Development Communication Approach

LEHA's scholarship recruitment is done openly through the partner schools and the local program coordinator. However, there are no open calls for applications at this initial stage of the Organisation. The criteria for the choice of partner schools consist of location in the war-torn English-speaking Cameroon as well as propensity or actual records of helping the underprivileged children. LEHA's sponsorship criteria target youth who are vulnerable, the brilliant, the average, and the female child. The sensitivity to the vulnerable youth is the connection point for all in the LEHA network. An increasing number of youth have successfully completed their academic programs since its inception in 2022.

Number of youth who successfully completed their programs:

Year	Secondary School	High School	Professional School	University	Dropouts	Total
2022-2023	11	5	0	0	0	16
2023-2024	7	8	2	0	0	17
2024-2025	23	5	3	1	0	32
Total 2022-2025	41	18	5	1	0	65

Table 2: Compiled from LEHA's annual reports

Those who completed can always have access to LEHA's personnel for coaching and counselling services. The growth of those completing from school under LEHA's sponsorship signals strategic approach and sustainability as the Alumni is being motivated to engage.

Diaspora Benefits on LEHA's Youth Empowerment Approach

The vision and operational model of LEHA e.V. is influenced by the diaspora experience of the Founder. Even though it is founded out of the local context, it was inspired by concrete feasibility studies of the local environment; thus it was easy to strategically identify the needs of the Cameroonian youth especially those in English-speaking Cameroon. While the local voices are important in designing the project and determining the needs (Moemeka, 2000), an appraisal of the socio-political and economic situation makes certain needs obvious—educational, health support as well as humanitarian aid. Its mission and objectives are quite relevant to the crucial needs of the Cameroonian youth; namely, educational sponsorship of the youth especially at the heart of the so called Anglophone crisis that drastically destabilized the school system: dispersed youth and teachers, impoverished parents, set the school structures afire, etc. (International Crisis Group, 2017)

The hybrid insight of LEHA e.V. makes the Organisation's approach more distinguished in its holistic depth in youth development, intense, bilateral, transparent and consistent communication with all stake holders, coaching, individualized counseling, etc. By so doing, LEHA e.V. adds remarkably to the children's network of significant others and points of references, which is psychologically stabilizing for youth living with tremendous trauma of war. They also learn practically the application of social media in educational enhancement and conferences, which they, otherwise, might not have been exposed to. Notwithstanding, there is concern that the macro governance shortcomings in Cameroon will hamper the potential breakthrough that LEHA promises in youth development. Therefore, the requirement for sanitizing the socio-political and economic system in Cameroon for sustainable and impactful growth cannot be overemphasized.

Theoretical Framework

This paper hinges on two theories: the participation development theory and the globalization theory.

The participatory theory is associated with Nora Quebral of the Los Banos development communication school in Latin America. It was developed in criticism of the modernization and the dependency theories which attributed the underdevelopment of the global south to internal factors alone without realizing the stifling effect of the top-down approach of the global north on the underdeveloped countries. The participatory development theory postulates that when development decisions are taken by all the stakeholders, with due attention to the voices of the beneficiaries, the project is likely to be sustainable. The beneficiaries must own the project because they are the guarantors of its sustainability. Should there be need for behaviour change among the beneficiaries in rural development, the two-way communication model, dialogue is equally applied to bring it about. Participation development theory negates the top-down communication approach because it generates shallow and short-lived results, and creates power imbalance.

Even though the inception of the educational sponsorship by LEHA e.V. did not strictly consult the population, feasibility studies and the insider-experience of the Founder were apt in identifying the needs of the Cameroonian youth. In its operations, the

participatory approach in dealing with the beneficiaries is prioritized, upscaled by the use of social media. For example, writing an application for sponsorship during professional training or university studies, submitting written reports monthly, at the end of every site visit session, documentation of online meetings with the aid of an agenda and meeting minutes, written financial reports at the end of every academic year and an annual activity report in German and English. The interconnectedness created between LEHA and the beneficiaries is expected to create more impact on the lives of the youth even as alumni and spur them to give back to community. LEHA ensures that “during school and training, beneficiaries take responsibility for themselves and the communities in which they live and learn”, and this is the beginning of the spirit of giving back.

Globalization theory

The globalization theory was propounded by Arjun Appadurai in 1996 through his work, *Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. As a post-modern and post structural theory, it prioritizes identity and perception over institutions. He delineates five types of “scapes”, describing different dimensions of global culture, of technology, media images, finance, people and ideas around the world.

Technoscapes refers to the “global configuration ... of technology and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries” (Appadurai, 1996, p 30)

Financescapes explores the reality of the fast movement of capital across frontiers through currency exchange on internet-based platforms, orchestrated by the ethnoscape actors.

Mediascapes refers to electronic capabilities to production and distribution of information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film production studios) and accessible to a growing number of audience across the world. The increasing number of digital production programs and the ease of distribution, culminating in recent years, in the social media platforms has a tremendous impact on the technoscape and ideoscape.

Ethnoscapes concern persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and persons. These constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of / and between nations. More and more persons have to move or fantasize movement for one reason or the other. The diaspora is estimated to remit 54 billion FCFA to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2023 (Kindzeka, 2024), which has continued to carry the burden of global poverty despite efforts at implementing the Sustainable Development Goal, Number 1; to reduce poverty. (UN Statistics, 2025).

Appadurai exposes how communities are forged transnationally through migrations, networks of diaspora, technology, electronic media, ideologies and global capital, which collapse the supremacy of nation-states (Appadurai, 1996).

Diaspora and globalization constitute a glaring pair of reality in the Cameroonian social, economic, political, ideological and ethnological landscape. Every clan has at least a member living abroad; thus there is interchange of capital and ideologies facilitated first

and foremost by the media. This interchange should have been a great booster to development if not of corruption and lack of a political will to develop or just loop around and enjoy free money that characterize majority of the home-based partners. The founder of LEHA e.V. is leveraging on his global experience of being born, bred and educated in Cameroon up to High School before moving to Europe for further studies. The hybrid experience impels LEHA e.V. to give back for development in Cameroon, targeting youth education, for LEHA believes that “the most reasonable way to contribute to sustainable development is to invest in the education of children and youths”. LEHA’s status imbues the Organisation with a multi-cultural development and communication approach, which is hopeful for sustainable development in Cameroon especially as the beneficiaries are called to give back through the LEHA alumni.

Research Findings

The methodology of conceptual analyses of secondary sources and unstructured interview of LEHA’s officials and beneficiaries was considered appropriate for the exploratory character of this paper. The following findings surfaced:

1. Globalization is ubiquitous, irreversible and pervasive, a contemporary force touching on individuals and groups, facilitated by multiple communication media.
2. Sanitizing the socio-political system of Cameroon is a *conditio sine qua non* for Cameroon’s emergence since good governance and professional aptitude constitute fundamental pillars for sustainable development.
3. The Cameroonian diaspora has a massive unexploited potential to impact development back home as demonstrated by LEHA, who possesses both the will and capacity to upscale development through youth empowerment. The promoters of LEHA possess hybrid knowledge and experience that globalization is supposed to bring to bear on equitable development.

Discussion of findings

1. Globalization is ubiquitous and pervasive: There is hardly anyone who is untouched by the sweep of globalisation. Appadurai (1996), in the enunciation of his globalization theory identifies five “scapes”: ethnoscaples, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes, which elaborate how global frameworks affect these interconnected parts of individual and social life, orchestrated by “nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, subnational groupings and movements, and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families” (p.31). Facilitated by the social media and other communication technologies, globalization constitutes a conglomeration of contemporary forces that individuals and groups need to leverage, through mutual learning, for sustainable development (Basnur, 2024).
2. Sanitizing the socio-political system of Cameroon is a *conditio sine qua non* for its emergence: The Cameroonian socio-political system remains marred by institutional shortcomings such as corruption, lawlessness, favoritism, bribery, embezzlement, etc (Fofack and Akendung, 2020). Those executing public contracts are hardly held accountable for delays, poor quality service or contract abandonment. Business in Cameroon (2023) corroborates the impact of the dysfunction by noting that the rate of public investment budgets in 2020 was

executed by 92.36% against the 74.99% in 2021; indicating that the completion rate remains instable. In the study carried out by Mfondo & Afanji (2014), embezzlement of project funds was one of the highest (70.1%) reason for project failure together with corruption, poor governance, embezzlement and incompetence. Without the eradication of these systemic inconsistencies, the material and immaterial resources, set deadlines, communication technologies or even diaspora engagement will not catalize the nation's emergence. Sanitizing the system entails, among other things, sanctioning detractors according to legal provisions, re-instating meritocracy, transparency and accountability (Evine, 2024). Fofack and Akendung (2020, p.108) corroborate the centrality of good governance by arguing that "sound institutional frameworks protect human and property rights, sustains democracy, social justice, and constitutes the foundation upon which everything else is built".

Additionally, Competency deficiency in Cameroon in project management causes project failure (Evine, 2024). Mistakes and lapses in technical work, inability to respect complex funding terms from partners, inability to respect project timelines and technical specifications and mismanagement of resources are indications that development stakeholders need more expertise and skills in project management. This tallies with Zipporah (2009) and Mfondo & Afanui (2014) who found out that between 2018 and 2021, 38 projects, approved and registered in the public investment budget of Adamawa, one of the five poorest Regions of the Country, were abandoned because the contractor became bankrupt or the central treasury failed to pay for the invoices submitted by the contractor.

3. The Cameroonian diaspora does possess a massive unexploited potential to impact development back home as illustrated by LEHA e. V. in the domain of youth empowerment. The promoters of LEHA, like others in diaspora, possess hybrid knowledge and experience brought to bear by globalization. Ouchou & Williams (2019) re-echo the need for a paradigm shift from negative to positive appreciation, posing the perception of migrants as "development agents in the host or home countries", They contribute ethical value schemes, democratic principles and enhance cultural diversity (Kindzeka, 2024), notwithstanding the challenges, such as contraband. LEHA is imbued with deep cultural sensitivity of both Europe and Africa, thus can ensure cultural adaptability without which development programs cannot be sustainable (Moemeka, 2000; Inyang et al, 2020). LEHA's setup puts under control the ills that threaten other developmental initiatives in Cameroon; such as incompetency, bad governance, mismanagement, laziness and favoritism. Both within its internal administrative operations and in dealings with the beneficiaries, LEHA is proactive with values such as integrity, capacity building, objective-driven engagement, participation, community consciousness, accountability, transparency and multi-approach communication skills upscaled by the social media. LEHA's approach to development communication should be benchmarked as one of the possible emerging models for Africa's sustainable development. The Cameroonian diaspora thus emerges as the most appropriate actor for inclusive, relevant, standard and sustainable development driver in Cameroon.

Conclusion

The conglomeration of the social and mass media as well as other actors in international communication offers tremendous opportunities for learning best practice at almost no cost (Ogumola, 2015). Yet, Cameroon and many other sub-Saharan African Countries have not maximized it for their development agenda, shown in the deficiency of social amenities, governance irregularities and incompetence. The progressive improvement in digital communication has enabled exchange and information sharing since the Gutenberg invention in the 16th century. Subsequently, the widening scope of interchange engenders further possibilities for economic, commercial, political and social upliftment. These connections melt frontiers and bring people closer to each other. From the foregoing, globalization could be traced to have grown alongside communication evolution, coupled with movement of goods and capital.

Development, as the exploitation of resources to meet the fundamental needs of the population, brings on board governments that possess the overall development roadmap, drawn with grassroot input presumably; non-governmental agencies; funders; and fundamentally, the beneficiaries who play a unique role in sustainable development. Upon these, the effective application of communication ties all in synergy to pursue the development objectives, to mobilize resources, engage stakeholders, build consensus and drive social change (Oepen & Willner, 2006).

While communities can drive their own development agendas, the technical, material and technological inadequacies of one group necessitate partnerships and synergies with others for relevant innovations. Oepen & Willner (2006) identifies building of partnership and cooperations as an important prerequisite for project success, whereby LEHA already has more than 10 collaborating educational institutions and is establishing collaboration with similar international organisations operating in Cameroon. Some governments have accorded to their diasporas “a more formal, powerful gate” to influence homeland politics and development (Yun 2012 in Golan and Yang, 2015, p 281); however, Bravo (2015) opines that such should be a win-win negotiation. According to Østergaard-Nielsen in Bravo (2015, p 284) the diasporas demand more transparency and good governance in order to be assured that their remittances and foreign direct investment are spent in the best possible way”. If they are engaged in lobbying on behalf of their countries abroad, it is logical to want to have some influence on the homeland policies that they are expected to represent. According to the World Bank, remittance from abroad to Sub-Saharan Africa stood at 54 billion FCFA in 2023. LEHA e.V. has set its pace and envisages the rise of media tools to serve development not only with the funders, but with staff and above all, with the beneficiaries through audio-visual calls and conferences, transmission of reports and other documents in real time. Therefore, digital communication lubricates participatory development models among the diaspora and the home-based Cameroonians to instate a new, efficient development model for Africa. Those who tried and failed should try again because to succeed is to have tried many times.

Recommendations

The diaspora and home based should embark on leveraging hybrid potentials of the diaspora and new media in the sphere of development to create a new Africa.

The Cameroonian government should embark on intentional administrative clean-up that would attract the diaspora who desire to give back by assisting in developmental projects (Nwudo et al, 2018).

Development stakeholders should utilize media tools effectively to demonstrate the scale of successful development accomplished through collaboration between the diaspora and home-based, changing the “failure” narrative that has characterized the African development history.

Both Cameroonians at home and diaspora should recognize the unique hybrid potentials for transformation and innovation imbued in the diaspora and exploit it.

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