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Civil Conflict's Impact on the Pursuit of Inclusivity, Safety, Resilience and Sustainability in Anglophone Cities of Cameroon

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Abstract

Cities are increasingly becoming sites where violence and conflict thrive. In the African continent, civil conflict has been rife, with cities not only being targets but also hosts to civil unrest. Since 2016, Anglophone (English-speaking) cities in Cameroon have been host to a civil conflict that has had devastating impacts on the socio-economic well-being of the Anglophone regions, impeding efforts to achieve sustainable development goal 11 (SDG 11), related to inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability in Anglophone cities. Moreover, the conflict has deepened the divide between the Anglophone and Francophone populations, making peaceful coexistence between them increasingly difficult. Utilising a content analysis methodological approach, this paper examines the Anglophone Cameroon civil conflict through the lens of urban sustainability, looking to unravel how the conflict has affected efforts towards pursuing SDG 11 in Anglophone cities. The paper argues that civil conflict has robbed Anglophone cities of the required ingredient of socio-economic and political stability necessary for SDG 11 to thrive, and unless the civil conflict is curbed and a stable peace attained, the pursuit of inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability in Anglophone cities would be a futile venture. This paper recommends the establishment of a comprehensive approach to resolve the conflict in a way that considers the root causes of the conflict, as well as measures to foster urban sustainability in Anglophone cities. When this is done, it would be more feasible to attain inclusivity, safety, resilience, and sustainability in Anglophone cities.

Keywords Anglophone Cameroon conflict · Anglophone cities · SDG 11 · Inclusivity · Safety · Resilience · Sustainability · Urban sustainability

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Introduction

In the medieval period, wars and conflicts were often scheduled to take place on battlefields, which were usually open fields in remote areas far from buildings and human civilisation (Keen, 1999). Although in some instances, especially when it concerned overthrowing a monarch, the war was taken to their castles, battlefield combat was usually the norm. The rationale for this was to avoid civilian casualties as well as the potential economic and political sanctions of attacking populated areas (Keen, 1999). However, as time passed, this traditional fashion of conflict and fighting gradually became outmoded and cities increasingly became not just targets (Bishop & Clancey, 2013), but also hosts of wars and conflicts (Beall et al., 2013; Graham & Marvin, 2001; King, 2021; Svitková, 2015), where belligerents clashed, with the use of all sorts of ammunitions, including bombs and even nuclear weapons. This is quite ironic, given the evolution of the laws that regulate warfare and their emphasis on the protection of civilians and civilian targets. The Russia-Ukraine war stands as a contemporary example of urban warfare (Ljungkvist, 2022).

Although the devastating effects of the Second World War (WWII) led to a commitment to "never again" allow such madness to befall mankind, conflicts have continued to ravage cities around the world. If one were to consider these conflicts collectively, they would arguably amount in just as much devastation as WWII, if not worse (Sampaio, 2016). While inter-state conflicts use to be the trend, since the last decade of the previous century, conflicts have taken a turn towards the internal side (Kaldor, 2006; Newman, 2009), with the rise in civil conflict and other forms of intra-state violence, often between state and non-state armed groups (Harbom and Wallensteen, 2009; Fox and Hoelscher, 2010). The examples of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia evince this assertion.

In the African continent, conflicts have been rife (Annan, 2014). African cities have been plagued by civil conflicts for decades (Williams, 2017). Many of these conflicts have their roots in historical injustices and inequalities, such as ethnic and religious tensions, economic disparities, and the desire for economic or political autonomy (Annan, 2014). The legacy of colonialism, which often created arbitrary borders, fuelled tribal antagonism and imposed centralised systems of governance, has also played a significant role in the emergence of civil conflicts on the African continent (Tusalem, 2016). The struggle for the control of resources, power, and other socio-cultural and political factors also constitute key drivers of conflicts in African cities (Tusalem, 2016). Civil conflicts account for why most African cities have been reduced to fragile and figleaf cities without any substantial development or economic growth. The examples of Abidjan in the Ivory Coast[1]; Kinshasa in the DRC[2]; Juba

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[1] The city was affected by civil conflict in the early 2000s. The conflict was rooted in political and ethnic tension and was characterised by human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and forced displacements (Ogwang, 2011).

[2] The city has been affected by civil conflict for decades, which has led to widespread violence and displacement. The conflict was rooted in the struggle for the control of resources and power (Samset, 2002).

in South Sudan[3]; Benghazi in Libya[4]; Bujumbura in Burundi[5]; Bangui in the Central African Republic[6]; and the Niger Delta in Nigeria,[7] are worth mentioning. With the outbreak of the Anglophone Cameroon civil conflict, Anglophone cities may well be added to the list.

Since 2016, the Anglophone regions of Cameroon have been beset by a civil conflict pitting government forces against non-state separatist armed groups (Cho & Agbor, 2022), resulting in widespread human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, forced displacements, sexual violence, torture and other inhumane acts, as well as the destruction of property and the disruption of society. Although the international community and the Cameroon government are more emphatic about human rights and humanitarian concerns (Cho & Agbor, 2022), it is significant to note that conflicts often pose challenges that go beyond these realms. The Anglophone civil conflict has triggered a range of challenges that are capable of fundamentally destabilising the socio-economic and political fabric of the society and disrupting the pursuit of inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability in Anglophone cities—an aspiration which Cameroon, as a United Nations member state, commits to achieve by 2030. The question, however, whether this would be possible to achieve by 2030 (in just 6 years' time), is another issue altogether.

In the discussion that follows, the paper first paints the interconnectivity between the concepts of cities, conflict, and sustainability, by engaging with available literature. It then unpacks the SDG 11 pillars and Cameroon's "obligations" thereto; followed by a brief historical overview of the civil conflict in Anglophone Cameroon; and an examination of the impacts of the civil conflict on the pursuit of SDG 11 in Anglophone cities. The paper then concludes with a section that combines the findings and recommendations on the way forward to achieving SDG 11 in Cameroon's Anglophone cities.

Methodology

Utilising a content analysis methodological approach (desktop research method), this paper examines the Anglophone Cameroon civil conflict through the lens of urban sustainability, with the goal of answering the question: How has the Anglophone Cameroon civil conflict affected efforts towards pursuing SDG 11 in Anglophone

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[3] The city was affected by civil conflict in 2013, which led to widespread violence and displacement of communities. The conflict was rooted in political and ethnic tension (McMichael, 2016).

[4] The city has been affected by civil conflict since 2011. The conflict is rooted in the struggle for the control of resources and power (Bodalal & Mansor, 2013).

[5] The city was affected by civil conflict in 2015, the conflict was rooted in political tensions (Ngaruko & Nkurunziza, 2000).

[6] The city has been affected by civil conflict since 2012. The conflict is rooted in the struggle for control of resources and power (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017).

[7] Conflict is rooted in the struggle for control of resources and power. In the case of the Niger Delta, conflict was caused by the non-observance of environmental protection regulations by oil extraction companies, including, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Alapiki, 2001; Ukaga et al., 2012).

cities? In other words, how does the conflict impact efforts to make Anglophone cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable? The paper adopts a broad and rather generous view of what a city is considered to be in the context of Anglophone Cameroon. In this sense, Anglophone cities shall be Anglophone towns or urban areas that have opportunities, more government services, are heterogeneously populated with people from diverse tribes and backgrounds, attract investments, and are relatively more developed as opposed to typical rural areas and villages. By this contextual definition, this paper shall thus refer, not just to the main cities of Bamaneda (the Capital city of the North West Region (NWR)), Buea (the capital city of the South West Region SWR), Limbe and Kumba as Anglophone cities, but also other towns that may fit the definition such as Mamfe in the SWR, and Ndop and Kumbo in the NWR.

Cities, Conflict, and Sustainability: Interweaving the Concepts

The rise of the "urban age", characterised by a drastic and uncontrollable increase in the global population (French and Kotzé, 2018), a majority of which live in urban and peri-urban areas, has caused cities to be recognised as key drivers of development and growth. While the theory of the "urban age" has sparked controversy and is increasingly being questioned (Barnet and Parnell, 2016), it is undeniable that cities have become widely accepted as constituting key actors on the global sustainable development stage. According to Du Plessis (2017), this has also positioned city governments as key global governance actors. The raison d'être as to why cities are viewed as such has been afforded by Sassen (2013), who argues that cities have since been known to deal with many of the challenges plaguing the global environment, society, and the economy even before they became global concerns.

In as much as cities are perceived to be engines of economic growth and drivers of development and innovation (World Economic Forum, 2021), as Keivani (2009) puts it, "cities create wealth, enable economic functions, and offer greater life opportunities for their inhabitants", cities are also argued to constitute sites of disasters, violence and insecurity. Beall et al. (2013) have argued that while cities may serve as safe havens during conflicts, they are also capable of being sites of insurgency and warfare, especially during civil conflicts.

Aust and Du Plessis (2018), for example, argue that rapid urbanisation due to uncontrolled human activities has brought enormous challenges in cities, including increased slum dwellers, air pollution, and a strain on basic services and infrastructure, thus making cities vulnerable and exposing the diversified inhabitants that share the city spaces to natural disasters and health risks. Salahub et al. (2019) support this view, arguing that rapid urbanisation places cities at risk of increasing inequality and poverty, which may lead to growing violence and insecurity in cities, more specifically those in the global south.

Nogueira (2017) has demonstrated that cities are also places where conflict, poverty, human insecurity, inequality, and violence thrive, arguing that these challenges are capable of threatening the sustainability of cities. This indicates that there is a clear correlation between cities, conflict and sustainable development. The OECD

(2022) holds that conflicts and violence can disrupt the functioning of cities, causing environmental degradation, in addition to economic losses and displacement of populations. The rationale behind the adverse effects of conflicts on sustainability was expressed by the ICRC (2017), stating that in cities affected by conflict, the struggle for survival and the need for basic services are often prioritised over long-term sustainability, as such, resources such as water and energy are often used unsustainably as city dwellers strive to meet their immediate needs. Such unsustainable use of resources usually puts the future of the city and its residents at risk of lack and scarcity of resources (Savelli et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, some scholars have been keen on a correlation between sustainable development and peace. Along these lines, Yarnall et al (2021) argue that the pursuit of sustainable development can play a key role in reducing conflict and fostering peace. To them, by addressing the underlying causes of conflict, such as poverty and inequality, sustainable development can create a more stable and peaceful environment. Also, Voigt (2019) argues that the pursuit of environmental protection, which is a component of sustainable development is capable of preventing conflict and promoting peace, while Oswald (2019) is of the view that the pursuit of sustainable peace would strengthen sustainable development. Bouzar (2016) has found that there is an intrinsic relationship between the SDGs and peace and stability. He argues that without peace, it will be impossible to achieve any sustainable development goals.

Borrowing from the afore-discussed literature, this paper holds that cities are the primary sites of conception as well as reception of both conflicts and sustainable development and their impacts. The paper views that, although the pursuit of sustainable development may prevent or reduce conflicts in cities, once conflict is ongoing, it becomes difficult to make any substantial moves towards any sustainable development goals, given that during such times, survival is usually prioritised over sustainability.

SDG 11 and Cameroon's "Obligations" Thereto

Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) is a crucial component of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by 2030 (UN General Assembly, 2015). SDG 11 recognizes the central role of cities in fostering economic growth, promoting social well-being, and minimising environmental impact. This goal may further be understood in terms of its 10 targets which speak to specific issues including, *inter alia,* the provision of safe and affordable housing and the upgrading of slums; access to safe and sustainable transport systems; inclusive and participatory urban planning and management; protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage; reducing the number of deaths; disaster management; waste management; access to inclusive green and public spaces; strengthening of national and regional development planning; increasing the number inclusive and resilient cities by 2020; and the support of developing countries to build sustainable and resilient

buildings with the use of local materials (UN General Assembly, 2015). This indicates an urban sustainability vision (Du Plessis, 2017).

The concepts of inclusivity, safety, resilience, and sustainability constitute the key pillars that make up SDG 11 and which it seeks to achieve in cities globally. In light of the targets mentioned above, these pillars may be understood to connote the following:

The concept of an inclusive city as expressed in SDG 11 is based on the idea that every individual, regardless of their economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, or religion, should have equal access to and be empowered to participate in the social, economic, and political opportunities available in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2001). To achieve inclusivity, cities need to embrace diversity, participation, and equity as central elements of their development and governance (Angelidou & Psaltoglou, 2017). Exclusion on the other hand denotes the deprivation of certain groups from participating in the socio-economic and political life in cities (Beall et al., 2013). The right to the city, highlights equity, transparency, participation, diversity, and local democracy, and seeks to reduce exclusion, discrimination, poverty, and violence in urban areas (Whitzman et al., 2013). Inclusivity thus means that cities and communities are designed and developed in a way that meets the diverse needs of their inhabitants. This includes providing equitable access to affordable housing, transportation, healthcare, education, public spaces, and basic services for all residents, including marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Safety is a crucial pillar of SDG 11, as it aims to create cities and communities that are safe and secure for all inhabitants. While cities have been viewed to be spaces where issues such as crime, violence, and hazards are seen to occur, cities are also perceived to hold the solution to these problems (Du Plessis, 2017), buttressing the fact that cities constitute the engines of sustainable development (World Economic Forum, 2021). Safety involves implementing measures such as effective law enforcement, urban planning strategies that prioritize public safety, and the establishment of resilient infrastructure that can withstand natural disasters and other emergencies. A safe city involves not only the absence of violence or crime but also freedom from poverty and pollution (Abubakar & Aina, 2019). Notwithstanding, in most developing countries in Africa, conflicts, whether based on political, religious, ethnic, racial, or economic reasons, as well as crime, usually constitute one of the major factors that threaten the safety of cities (Abubakar & Aina, 2019).

Resilience denotes the ability of a city to bounce back after suffering disasters and crises, whether natural or man-made. A resilient city, as Newton and Doherty (2014) put it, is a city that "can handle climatic, financial, tectonic, socio-political challenges and thrive in the future" (2014). To them, these challenges are in two categories. The first class includes the persistent daily pressures on cities such as climate change, pollution, unemployment, deteriorating infrastructure, an aging population, and unsustainable resource consumption, which have a cumulative impact on cities over time. The second class of challenges consists of sudden events, such as natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and droughts, which can occur unexpectedly and cause significant damage in a short amount of time (Newton & Doherty, 2014). Conflicts such as the Anglophone civil conflict fits within the second category, but their prolonged nature may also contribute to worsening the daily

challenges within the first category. Resilience thus refers to the capacity of cities to anticipate, respond to, and recover from shocks and stresses, including natural disasters, climate change impacts, and socioeconomic challenges. The pillar of resilience in SDG 11 emphasizes the importance of building resilient infrastructure, developing comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies, and enhancing adaptive capacities (da Silva et al., 2020).

Sustainability is a fundamental pillar of SDG 11 and is closely linked to the concept of sustainable development as a whole. In the context of cities and communities, sustainability refers to balancing social, economic, and environmental considerations to ensure long-term well-being (Khanna, 2016). This involves promoting sustainable urban planning and design, resource efficiency, renewable energy, waste management, biodiversity conservation, and the protection of ecosystems. Sustainable cities and communities aim to minimize their environmental footprint, promote circular economy practices, and enhance the quality of life for present and future generations (Ngan et al., 2019).

By prioritising inclusivity, safety, resilience, and sustainability, SDG 11 seeks to create urban environments that are equitable, secure, adaptable, and environmentally conscious (Vaidya & Chatterji, 2020). These pillars provide a framework for governments, cities, communities, and individuals to work together towards the common goal of building sustainable cities and communities that prioritise the well-being and prosperity of all their residents. As a member of the United Nations, Cameroon is also required to achieve SDG 11 in its cities.

According to the United Nations, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and this number is expected to increase to two-thirds by 2050 (UNDP, 2019a, b). This projection is also true for Cameroon, where a majority of its population lives in urban areas. As such, the attainment of SDG11 in these urban spaces becomes quite compelling, especially given the challenges that rapid urbanisation poses to cities and human settlements, such as climate change, natural disasters, population growth and even conflicts.

In the midst of the foregoing, although the SDGs are not legally binding per se, being a member state of the UN, Cameroon owes it as a pledge to pursue SDG 11 in its cities. In this regard, pursuant to the 1996 Constitution, which transformed the country from a centralised to a decentralised unitary state, decentralization laws were enacted in 2004[8] and 2019,[9] aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development (Kofele-Kale, (2011). This legislation constitutes the main legal tool that equips regional and local city governments with the authority to participate in cascading SDG 11 and its targets to the city and local community levels, in ways that suit their different local contexts. Although, with major challenges being intrusions from the central government, given the heavy reliance on the central government for funding, which is often politicised and highly bureaucratic, the decentralisation legislation helps to set the stage as a tool for urban sustainability and a

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[8] Law No. 2004–18 of 22 July 2004 to Lay Down Rules Applicable to Councils.
[9] Law 2019/024 to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities.

"driving force for the promotion of development, democracy and good governance at the local level".[10]

In a bid to honour its SDG 11 obligations, the Cameroon government under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, has launched initiatives such as the National Urban Development Strategy (SNVU) and the Urban Development and Habitat Programme (PDHU) to promote sustainable urban development (Ministry of Housing & Urban Development, 2014). The government has also adopted policies to improve access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity in urban areas (UNDP, 2018).

Notwithstanding these efforts, there is still a plethora of challenges that hinder the achievement of SDG 11 in Cameroon as a whole (not just in Anglophone cities). These include, *inter alia,* the lack of affordable housing in cities, leading to an increase in informal settlements and slums (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Additionally, urban areas in Cameroon are vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, which have caused significant damage in the past (World Bank, 2013), and even recently in the city of Buea (Worlds Aid, 2023). Furthermore, access to basic services such as water and sanitation remains inadequate in many urban areas (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019). With regards to the Anglophone cities, civil conflict now tops the list of challenges that impair the attainment of SDG11 in Cameroon and Anglophone cities especially.

A Synopsis of the Anglophone Cameroon Civil Conflict

The Anglophone Cameroon civil conflict is a complex and ongoing crisis that began in 2016. The conflict has its roots in long-standing grievances and marginalisation felt by the Anglophone minority in the country (Fonchingong, 2013; Gros, 2003; Ngoh, 1999; Konings, 1999; Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). Due to its colonial history (a former British colony), the population in Anglophone (English-speaking) regions, made of the North West and South West Regions (NW&SWRs) has a distinct legal and educational system, as well as a different language (English) as opposed to the majority Francophone part of the country, which was colonised by the French (Dze-Ngwa, 2015).

The conflict began as a peaceful protest by Anglophone lawyers and teachers in 2016, who were calling for greater autonomy and the protection of the common law legal system and the Anglo-Saxon educational system which face the threat of extinction by the government (ICG, 2017; Ludovica, 2016). The government's response was heavy-handed, and the protests quickly escalated into a full-scale civil conflict between government security forces and separatist fighters who had emerged to fight against the injustices, calling for the secession of Anglophone Cameroon (Musah, 2022). Both parties have committed human rights violations, which have been argued to amount to crimes against humanity (Agbor & Njieassam, (Agbor and Njieassam2019); Cho & Agbor, 2022). The conflict has also led to widespread

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[10] Section 5 Law No. 2019/024 to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities.

displacement of communities, with many people fleeing to neighboring countries as refugees (UNHCR, 2019).

Efforts to resolve the conflict through dialogue have been unsuccessful. The government has even tried some reforms, but the opposition groups have rejected the government's offers, regarding them as temporary and too late, as secession has now become the demand on the table (ICG, 2017). The international community as well as some influential international organisations have warned the Cameroon government against its excessive use of force, urging her to take measures to end the conflict and restore peace and stability in the region (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

The Impact of the Anglophone Civil Conflict on the Pursuit of SDG 11 in Anglophone Cities

Rapid urbanisation poses considerable challenges to Cameroon's cities such as population growth, inadequate housing, pollution and poor infrastructure (UN-Habitat, 2022). In recent years, the Anglophone civil conflict has further exacerbated the situation, with a high number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) generated by the conflict, who turn to urban areas to seek refuge and opportunities for survival (UN-Habitat, 2022). While the cities of Douala, Yaounde and Bafoussam in the French-speaking regions have felt a heavy influx of IDPs, the Anglophone cities in which conflict is ongoing have also felt the stink, with IDPs rolling in from the nearby villages and suburbs (Bang & Balgah, 2022). This causes considerable strain on the services and the environment in these cities, and especially in Anglophone cities.[11] Civil conflict has without a doubt constituted an impediment to SGD 11 in Anglophone cities, as it has negatively affected all drivers of sustainable development, including the necessary political stability, human resources, and the already achieved development. Without these factors in place, the desire to make Anglophone cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable would remain only a rhetorical concept (Hennayake, 1997).

It may well be viewed that the Anglophone civil conflict does play a contributory role in impeding efforts to achieve SDG 11 in Anglophone cities (Bang & Balgah, 2022). The conflict has resulted in the displacement of residents and the destruction of infrastructure, prevented the rollout of new infrastructure, and created a situation of insecurity, as well as governance challenges for city governments, especially regarding efforts towards generating revenue for developmental projects, as funding is essential for cities to achieve SDG 11 (Fuo, 2018). These constitute the major implications, stemming from the civil conflict that makes it difficult to advance the ideals of SDG 11. Moreover, the conflict has deepened the divide between the Anglophone and Francophone populations, making peaceful coexistence between them increasingly difficult (Agwanda et al., 2020).

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[11] The fight against Boko Haram in the country's Far North region since 2013 and the Anglophone Cameroon crisis/conflict in the North West and South West regions (English-speaking regions) remain the most challenging conflicts Cameroon has dealt with in the last decade.

While the human rights implications of the conflict have been given much attention, with many scholars and practitioners decrying the human rights situation in the Anglophone civil conflict (Cho & Agbor, 2022; Agbor & Njieassam, 2019; HRW, 2018; Amnesty International, 2018; ICG, 2017), this paper leans towards an urban sustainability conversation by assessing the impacts of the conflict on the pursuit of inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability in Anglophone cities, given the grave, existential risk the conflict poses to the environment, the economy and the human resources, which constitute key elements of development for present and future generations. In fact, without a safe and healthy environment, human rights can hardly be achieved (Mashouka, 2022).

This paper argues that unless a lasting solution to the conflict is found, the attainment of SDG 11 in Anglophone cities will remain elusive. The sustainability of development efforts during the conflict is questionable, and the risk of destruction, displacement, destabilization, and disruption of development efforts remains as long as the conflict persists.

The Implications for Inclusivity: The Anglophone-Francophone Dichotomy

Over the course of human history, cities have played a crucial role in fostering social and cultural diversity by providing a space for people of diverse backgrounds to interact through economic, political and community engagements. Nevertheless, conflicts can have a detrimental impact on this cultural richness of urban environments, particularly when they result in forced migration and displacement of residents. As a consequence, the cohesion and vibrancy of cities become eroded, posing significant challenges to the ability of city governments to promote inclusive and equitable urban development (Sassen, 2010).

The Anglophone conflict has had exactly this impact on the pursuit of inclusivity and social cohesion in Anglophone cities. The conflict has fuelled animosity among the inhabitants in Anglophone cities, and also further widened the existing inequality between the Anglophone and Francophone populations of the regions and the country at large, making it difficult for peaceful cohabitation and coexistence between them (Lazar, 2019). Anglophone communities, families, and individuals have also been fragmented along the lines of different political ideologies and aspirations, for example (Agbor & Njieassam, 2019). While some want a federal government and are willing to achieve such through democratic and diplomatic means, another group leads a secessionist agenda which they hold as a matter of do-or-die (this is the faction of the population that pushed the escalation of the crisis into its current conflict status). Meanwhile, there is a group, led by the government that wants to maintain the present *status quo* of the state as a unitary state (Agbor & Njieassam, 2019). This situation has made it even more difficult to achieve an all-inclusive consensus on conflict resolution. In early 2017 and 2018, the government initiated a dialogue with the consortium of teachers, lawyers, and members of

civil society (otherwise known as "the consortium")[12] on how to reach an agreement on the cessation of violence, but the dialogue failed because of the lack of a unified front, given the disparities in aspirations (Okereke, 2018). More so, the government's heavy-handed, repressive methods have killed any iota of trust in its ability to objectively handle dissenting views on the way forward (Bang & Balgah, 2022). The Grand National Dialogue organised in September 2019, for example, also failed because of this (Chimtom, 2019).

Although both Anglophones and Francophones live in Anglophone cities, civil conflict has raised so much suspicion among them, making it problematic for peaceful cohabitation. In 2017, when the crisis became confrontational, some Francophones living in Anglophone cities, for fear of being targeted (given the hate speech that prevailed at the time against the Francophone-led government, which some also generalised to include Francophone people), began to flee from Anglophone cities ICG, 2017). Meanwhile, Anglophone IDPs who have fled to Francophone cities for refuge live in constant fear of being attacked by their host French-speaking counterparts, who rain insults on them (Kinang, 2022; O'Grady, 2019). There is no freedom of opinion and in such a scenario, the pursuit of inclusivity becomes far-fetched, as there can be no inclusivity if diversity is shunned and demonised.

Conflict's Effects on Safety: Security Risks in Anglophone Cities

Cities are often sites of unimaginable violence during conflicts, and the Anglophone cities, following the civil conflict, have seen the worse of it, given that conflict has destabilised the social fabric, posing considerable security risks to city dwellers.

Although the Anglophone civil conflict began as a peaceful protest, it later escalated into a full-scale civil conflict, leading to widespread violence and human rights violations, which have even been qualified as unprecedented (Agbor & Njieassam, 2019), and as crimes against humanity (Cho & Agbor, 2022). There have been cases of excessive use of force by the Cameroon security forces including the indiscriminate firing of live ammunition into crowds of unarmed civilians. The civilian population has been caught in the crossfire between state and non-state armed groups, featuring the commission of heinous atrocities. Publicly beating civilians, burning villages, extra-judicial killings, torture and other inhumane acts such as sexual violence have become common occurrences (HRW, 2018; Amnesty International, 2018; ICG, 2017). Women and children have been the most affected, with cases of rape ranking at the top of the list (UNOCHA, 2022).

Also, the conflict has provided an avenue for the commission of all sorts of crimes. Armed robberies, kidnapping for ransom, looting, hijacking and mutilations of body parts have been committed by individuals who claim to belong to the "Ambazonia movement" as well as criminal gangs (OSAC, 2019). There has also been the imposition of curfews and roadblocks by both security forces and separatist

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[12] The Consortium had Félix Agbor Nkongho as President, Fontem Neba as Secretary General, and Tassang Wilfred as the Treasurer.

fighters, where civilians are continually being extorted (Craig,2020; Nsonzefe 2019). All these paint a picture of unsafety in Anglophone cities.

The unfortunate repercussions of the conflict have been the displacement of populations, the death of many, as well as the disruption of ordinary life, socio-economic and educational activities (UNOCHA, 2023). According to a 2023 situation report by the UNOCHA on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, close to a million people have been displaced internally, most of whom have fled into Francophone regions of the country. There have been over 3,000 deaths, and close to a hundred thousand have sought refuge in neighboring Nigeria (UNOCHA, 2023; Craig, 2020; ICG, 2019).

The separatist tactics of ordering school boycotts, shutdowns and ghost towns, often resulted in grave consequences for those who did not respect their orders (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Violence had caused many schools to shut down forcing many children of school-going age to drop out of school. According to a UNOCHA report, less than 50 percent of the total school in Anglophone regions were functioning by December 2022, resulting in over half a million children being kept out of school (UNOCHA, 2023). This meant that the few schools that were functioning which were mostly in relatively secure city centres, had to harbour a high number of students who moved from conflict-torn villages to access education (UNOCHA, 2023). This puts a significant strain on the capacity of schools to carter for them, as well as on the scarce resources and services in these city centres.

The Impact on the Pursuit of Resilience: The Broken Spirit of the Anglophone People

Abubakar and Aina (2019) have shown that a city's ability to withstand and recover from crises and disasters depends on several essential factors, such as its capability to create effective long-term planning strategies, efficient management processes, and resilient urban systems. These indicators play a crucial role in enhancing resilience (Abubakar & Aina, 2019). In times of conflict, however, the ability of cities to make the necessary disaster management planning and preparations, or to handle the daily issues that may arise, becomes compromised. Conflict robs society and city governments of the financial and human capital required to make such arrangements. Conflict distracts the focus of both national and city governments, as they become more concerned with curbing the conflict than making preemptory designs toward building resilient cities (Cohen & Ross, 2021). In the city of Buea for example, there has recently been a flood that destroyed a lot of infrastructure, services, and people's sources of livelihood (Worlds Aid, 2023). Caused by heavy rainfall and poor drainage infrastructure, the impact of the flood could have been mitigated or prevented if not for the lack of preparation and observation of Mt. Cameroon and the distraction caused by the conflict. Bang and Balgah (2022), like prophets, had warned against an imminent threat of natural disaster in the Anglophone regions, urging authorities to take measures to reduce its impacts.

This paper views resilience also to be the ability of a city to withstand crisis and still be self-reliant and be able to provide the basic services and needs of its

residents, amidst socio-economic, environmental and political challenges. A city is said to be resilient if it can bounce back from conflict and forge on with societal life. The Anglophone conflict has clearly minimised the ability of Anglophone cities to be resilient.

The once strong and almost self-reliant cities and towns of Anglophone Cameroon have been reduced to figleaf cities that can bearly survive without help from international and national humanitarian aid and civil society organisations, that give handouts to the poor and affected people of the Anglophone regions (UNOCHA, 2023). In 2022, humanitarian aid organisations have assisted Anglophone cities in terms of emergency food packages, agricultural, and livelihood assistance, including gardening, pisciculture, poultry, and petty trade, as well as cash benefits, through a scheme known as the Humanitarian Response Plan.[13]

Most local farmers and entrepreneurs who use to flourish in their small corners and were able to afford their lives and support their families have been rendered poor by the conflict, lacking even the basic minimum to survive on (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Many self-employed youths, some of whom even employed others in their small businesses were put out of business by the conflict,[14] and as such, most Anglophone towns are full of unemployed, vulnerable young people, with many turning to unscrupulous avenues for survival. While some have joined the separatist fighters to fight the war of secession for the independence of a country they have coined as "The Republic of Ambazonia" (GRID, 2019; O'Grady, 2019), others resorted to crime: armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom (OSAC, 2019).

Certainly, the civil conflict in the Anglophone regions has crushed the spirits of the inhabitants of the villages, towns, and cities, taking away their resilience. It has become a difficult task for the population in these cities to sustain themselves. Children have been forced to drop out of school. Most parents, who are local farmers no longer have access to their farms, mostly situated in areas occupied by separatist fighters for their hideouts, which are also increasingly targeted by security forces (Bang & Balgah, 2022). People's sources of livelihood have been destroyed, leaving them helpless and hopeless. While humanitarian and civil society organisations are on the ground to assist the very poor people with necessities, there is still great difficulty in terms of accessing the interior parts of the regions, as such aid only reaches less than 40 percent of those in need (Craig, 2020). Also sometimes the process of getting these items is highly politicised, due to government intervention.[15] Moreover, as the conflict is ongoing, insecurity continues to be disruptive, causing people to abandon livelihood activities and flee to more secure locations in urban areas.

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[13] In the NWR, divisions that have benefited include Bui, Mezam, Momo, Menchum, Ngoketunjia, Donga-Mantung, and Boyo, while in the SWR, most of the beneficiaries are in the Fako, Meme, and Manyu divisions (UNOCHA, 2023).

[14] Most youths in the Aglophone region are involved in the public transport sector, with the use of taxis and motorbikes for commercial purposes. Others are into airtime and mobile money transfer services under multinational companies such as MTN and Orange.

[15] The government usually shares these items using its political party, as such those who are not affiliated to the ruling CPDM party hardly get much. Its even been noted that some civil servants who have salaries still crip in to collect items meant to help IDPs and those affected by the conflict.

The civil conflict has stripped Anglophone cities of their resilience, and as long as conflict persists, the dream of making Anglophone cities resilient remains a difficult one.

The Impact on Sustainability

The idea of "sustainability" in the context of cities is multifaceted. A sustainable city can be viewed to constitute a city that integrates into its developmental and managerial policies a set of principles that emphasize the sustainable use of resources, the use, protection and preservation of the environment, as well as the carrying out of economic activities in ways that ensure adequacy for both present and future generations (UN-Habitat, 2016). However, during conflicts, city dwellers become conditioned to survive, and as such, they care more about their immediate needs. This breathes unsustainable use and consumption patterns which put pressure on the environment and basic services (ICRC, 2017).

The civil conflict's impact on the sustainability of cities and communities in the Anglophone regions is palpable. Sustainability in this sense is looked at in terms of urban sustainability, taking into consideration elements of environmental, social and economic sustainability (Powe, 2020).

The displacement of populations has put unbearable pressure on urban areas, particularly in terms of housing and basic services like healthcare and education. As a result, most village inhabitants have fled to Francophone regions and city centres of Anglophone cities, where they can access humanitarian aid and other services (UN-Habitat, 2022). Families in urban areas and other French-speaking cities have taken in abnormal numbers of people who have fled villages for the cities (UN-Habitat, 2022).

The civil conflict has had a serious impact on the environment in Anglophone cities. The use of improvised explosives by separatists, the scorched earth tactics of burning and destroying villages employed by security forces, deforestation by IDPs and separatist fighters in forest lands that serve as refuge and hideouts, as well as the poor municipal waste management systems, paints the picture of the unfortunate environmental situation as caused by the Anglophone conflict (Bang, 2022). The most visible impacts in cities have been the poor waste management systems, especially in the cities of Bamenda and Buea. Insecurity in Anglophone cities, coupled with disruption of life, destruction of infrastructure, and displacement of populations have made it difficult to institute or implement environmental protection and waste management measures, putting the environment of the region at risk (Bang & Balgah, 2022). The waste management situation in Anglophone cities has been worsened by the conflict, with increased waste generation due to overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions of displaced persons. The strain attack on waste management systems has led to waste being dumped in open areas, streets, and

waterways,[16] causing pollution and health concerns for residents (Bang, 2022). The consequences of the conflict on the environment for future generations are dire.

The civil conflict has disrupted livelihoods, causing people to flee their homes and businesses, leading to loss of income and assets (Bang & Balgah, 2022), which has made it difficult for affected communities to access basic needs and services crucial for economic sustainability. Destruction of infrastructure such as roads and bridges has made transportation of goods and services difficult, hindering economic activity (ICG, 2019). Local farmers have difficulties accessing farms and markets, leaving farmlands uncultivated, causing a drastic reduction in yields of both food and cash crops, leading to food insecurity and inflation in Anglophone cities and even nationwide, given that the regions are considered the breadbasket of the country (DW News, 2020). Even agro-industrial companies in Anglophone cities, including the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE), and the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority (UNVDA) have been greatly affected by the conflict, leading to an overall negative impact on the economy (Bang & Balgah, 2022).

In 2018, the CDC's operational capacity, for example, dropped to 26 percent, resulting in huge losses of up to 32 billion ($55.3 million), as well as the loss of 30 thousand jobs, given that the CDC is the second largest employer in Cameroon after the governments (Mbodiam, 2020). In the city of Buea for example, unemployment rates rose to 70 percent by the end of 2018 (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Insecurity had also led to the stalling of many developmental projects. Road contractors often faced threats, attacks and vandalisation of their equipment, resulting in the abandonment of projects. According to reports, over 80 percent of road construction projects awarded to be carried out in Anglophone cities between 2017 and 2020 remain unexecuted (Mbodiam, 2020; ICG, 2019).

The ongoing conflict in Cameroon has also resulted in a decline in tourism in the affected cities, such as Buea and Limbe.[17] These cities, which have numerous tourist attractions, have seen a drastic fall in the number of tourists, leading to a decline in job opportunities and economic growth, resulting in revenue losses that this sector contributes to the development of Anglophone cities (WTTC, 2019).

As a developing country, Cameroon depends on foreign investment for its economic growth and development. The ongoing conflict has led to a decline in foreign investment, with multinational corporations such as MTN being targeted by separatist fighters (Business in Cameroon, 2019). The violence has made business operations and investments in Anglophone cities risky (ICG, 2019), while the

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[16] Conflict prevented waste management workers of HYSACAM (a French acronym meaning Hygiene and Health in Cameroon), a private waste management company and those of local municipalities from their routine collection of household waste for prolonged periods. This caused inhabitants to dump their waste on the streets, which results in environmental pollution.

[17] Cities with tourist attractions such as Buea (where Mount Cameroon is situated) and Limbe (a coastal city bordering the Atlantic ocean with great tourist attractions such as the Botanical gardens, the zoo, the beach, the slave trade village, and the seaport) have recorded drastic fall in the number of tourists that usually stomp the cities every year to savour the diversity of fauna and flora and the rich culture of the Anglophone people.

government's heavy-handed response has damaged the country's reputation and made it less attractive to foreign investors. Investment from nationals, including the Bamileke people and Anglophone Cameroonians in the diaspora (locally known as "Bush fallers"), has also declined due to extortion and fear of losing investments (Tebeck, 2019). This has prevented developmental projects from being implemented in conflict-torn areas.

The ongoing conflict in Cameroon has resulted in the loss of human resources, especially educated and skilled individuals. Humans are the orchestrators of development in cities. They are the planners, engineers, builders, and technicians that drive the developmental process (Batty, 2008). When conflict destroys and disrupts human capital, development is stalled. This also puts a strain on the available human capital, as it becomes problematic for the economic growth of the region, given that those who are supposed to contribute to development have been snatched away by conflict (UNDP, 2011; Blattman & Miguel, 2010). Additionally, the high number of school drop-outs has reduced the future skilled human resources, while the frequent targeting of academic institutions and instructors, and the shutdown of many schools has led to low-quality graduates from universities and high schools in Anglophone cities (UNICEF, 2019).

In the face of the foregoing, it is undeniable that the civil conflict has tremendously hindered any action toward pursuing safety, inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability. It is thus crucial for the government and other stakeholders to address the conflict and provide support for the socio-economic and political recovery of Anglophone cities, else, what hope would Anglophone cities have for survival? What therefore is the way forward?

Conclusion

Having interrogated the Anglophone Cameroon civil conflict and its impact on the pursuit of inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability, this article finds that the neglect of the development of Anglophone cities,[18] and the non-inclusion of Anglophones in governance were some of the factors that sparked the Anglophone civil conflict in 2016 (Ngoh, 2019). There were no Anglophones in top government or ministerial positions, they only held subordinate positions while their Francophone counterparts held the top-ranking positions (Shaban, 2018).[19] Anglophone cities have for a long time been neglected by the central government, with their city governments having little resources or power to contribute to development and growth in the regions (Chia et al., 2020; Immanuel, 2019). Poor road networks, dilapidated bridges and buildings, and old and worn-out infrastructures characterise most

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[18] This supports the view that the neglect of sustainable development has the potential to trigger conflict, while the pursuit thereof can promote peace and prevent conflict (Yarnall et al., 2021).

[19] Dr Nalova Lyonga and Atanga Nji Paul were appointed as ministers for Secondary Education and Territorial Administration respectively.

Anglophone cities (Taku & Kamga, 2019). This paints a picture of "a forgotten people" left to sort themselves out.

Meanwhile, Anglophones and Francophones have had a strained relationship for decades due to this socio-political divide propagated by the Francophone-led government (Lazar, 2019). While policies were put in place to encourage coexistence between the two factions, the outbreak of the Anglophone civil conflict has reopened old wounds, further severing the rift between Francophones and Anglophones, making coexistence a challenge, as such hindering inclusivity among the two factions living in Anglophone cities (Musah, 2022).

The civil conflict in Anglophone Cameroon has hindered development in affected cities, but it has also resulted in the underutilization of the natural environment. While this has allowed for resources such as the forest, fish stock and farmlands to rejuvenate and replenish,[20] the present generation's development and well-being have suffered. However, if the conflict escalates further, the environmental ramifications would be dire for both present and future generations.

Violence in Anglophone Cameroon is not uniform across regions, with some areas experiencing less frequent hostilities and showing signs of development. The city of Buea, for example, has seen lower levels of violence compared to Bamenda, leading to more developmental projects being realized. However, there is a pervasive sense of insecurity in Anglophone cities, hindering efforts to promote public safety. The emergence of a war culture has worsened the situation, with separatist groups being involved in individual disputes, resulting in false accusations and fatalities, further deteriorating the security situation in Anglophone cities.

In the midst of the foregoing, the pursuit SDG 11 in Anglophone cities remains a serious challenge, and as such, there is a need for measures to be taken to salvage the situation.

The attainment of inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability in Anglophone cities is a plausible objective. However, the efficacy of the execution of the measures is fundamental to achieving success in this regard. The SDG 11 targets as discussed above certainly pose credible pointers to what the government needs to engage so as to achieve SDG 11. This paper concludes by making recommendations on the way forward to strengthening the pursuit of SDG 11 in Anglophone cities.

One key strategy could be the promotion of inclusive and participatory governance. An effective decentralisation of governance that involves more Anglophone elites in the governance of their cities, has the potential to change the present *status quo* and foster inclusivity (Ngoh, 2019). By so doing, the Anglophone-Francophone divide and the animosity that exists between them would naturally be suppressed.

Also, affected communities, including the most affected groups such as IDPs, refugees, women, children, and disabled people, should be involved in the decision-making processes in the event of reconstruction, rehabilitation and peacebuilding (Bang & Balgah, 2022). This can be achieved through public–private partnerships (PPPs) (Berrone et al., 2019; Castelblanco & Guevara, 2022), which entails

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[20] This could be the "one and only" positive impact of the civil conflict on environmental sustainability so far.

collaboration with the private sector, including community-based civil society organisations, NGOs, and traditional authorities, most of whom are already in close contact with the affected communities.

Another important strategy is the erection of sustainable and resilient infrastructure. This includes investing in the repair and development of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and public transportation to improve connectivity and access to services in urban areas as well as villages. Providing access to affordable housing is also crucial to making Anglophone cities safe, inclusive, and resilient, especially for the rehabilitation of IDPs and refugees (UNDESA, 2017). More so, compensating victims by giving them reparation packages such as capital to revamp and re-establish their businesses, as well as seeds for their farms can be very instrumental in promoting resilience in Anglophone cities (Hamber, 2008).

Safety for Anglophone cities can also be pursued by passing a strong message of intolerance of violence and impunity. This can be done by holding perpetrators of human rights violations committed in the Anglophone civil conflict accountable (Cho & Agbor, 2022). Also, to foster inclusivity and peaceful cohabitation, measures should be taken to guarantee lasting peace and coexistence between the Anglophone and Francophone populations of the country (Omeje, 2019). In this regard, constitutional reforms that address the political *status quo* and form of the country could be a great starting point.

While it may be difficult to achieve SDG 11 in cities affected by conflict, promoting the pursuit thereof in conflict times may well contribute to reducing violence, especially where the conflict is characterised by sporadic and periodic attacks and not a full-blown civil war marked by intense violence and severe clashes on a daily basis. Nonetheless, as long as the conflict persists, the risk of destruction, displacement, destabilisation, disruption of development efforts and unsustainable behaviour remains. Therefore, while development may be pursued, sustainability thereof is not guaranteed.

At this point, it may be justified to resolve that the Anglophone civil conflict has robbed Anglophone cities of the required ingredients of socio-economic and political stability necessary for SDG 11 to thrive, and unless the civil conflict is curbed and a stable peace attained, the pursuit of inclusivity, safety, resilience and sustainability in Anglophone cities would be a futile venture.

This article also recommends addressing the underlying grievances of the English-speaking minority, which constitute the root causes of the conflict, through an inclusive political process that protects the rights and interests of all people. Reducing government intrusions by strengthening and granting more financial autonomy to Anglophone city governments would also be instrumental in allowing cities strategise towards attaining SDG 11. When these are done, efforts at making Anglophone cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable would be more effective. Whether this would be achieved by 2030 given the remaining 6 years time frame, however, remains doubtful.

The article reiterates the position expressed in the preamble of the Global Agenda 2030 that sustainable development and peace are interdependent (UN General Assembly, 2015). Thus, some negotiated peace must be attained, without which no sustainable development goals may be achieved (Bouzar, 2016). This begs the

question of how sustainable peace can be attained to pave the way for sustainable development. Pondering on this question may well open up a world of horizons for further research.

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