

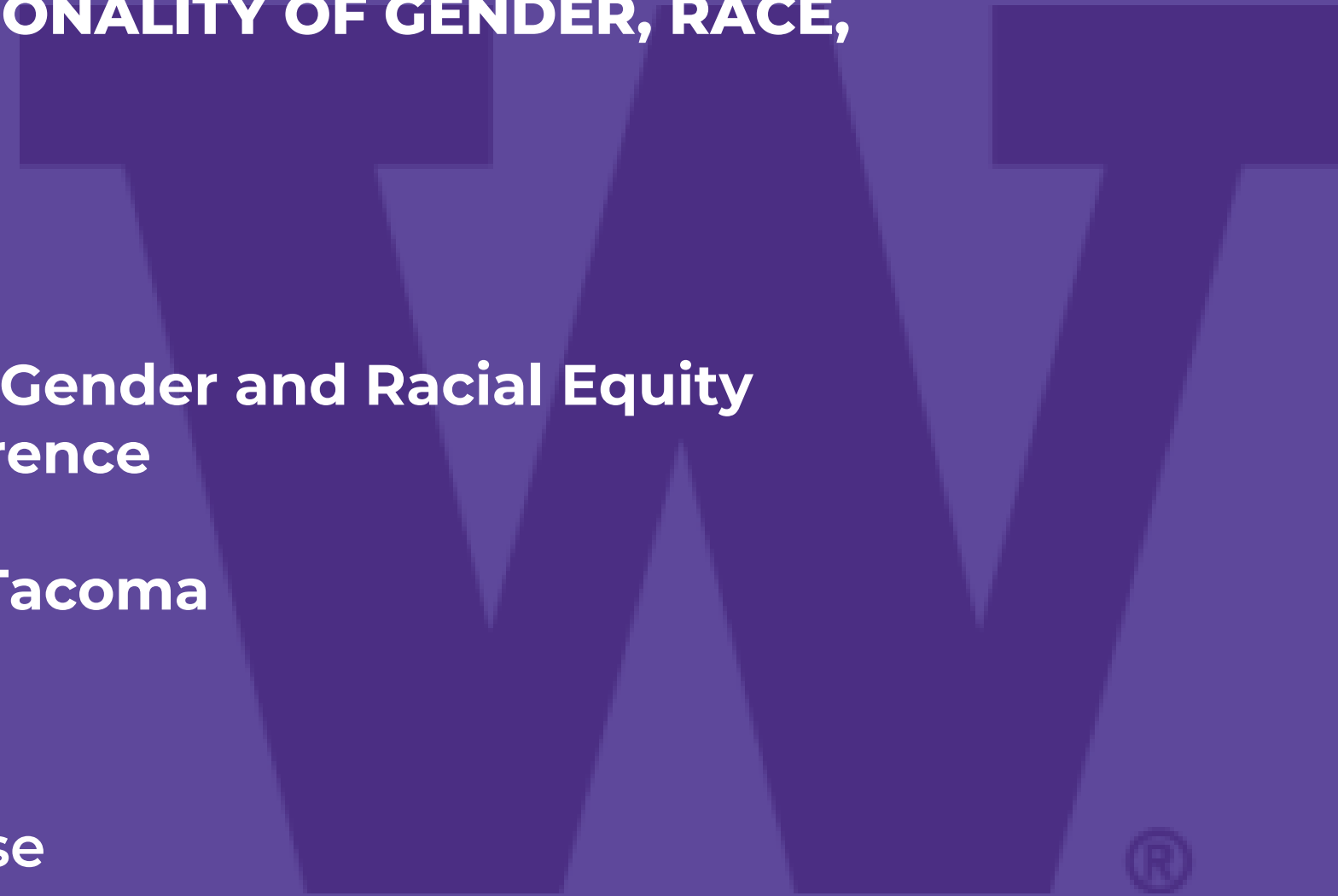
# **EXPLORING THE STRUGGLES AND RESILIENCE OF CAMEROONIAN WOMEN:**

**THROUGH THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF GENDER, RACE,  
AND COLONIAL LEGACIES**

**Health and Human Rights: Gender and Racial Equity  
Global Engagement Conference  
May 22, 2024  
University of Washington Tacoma**

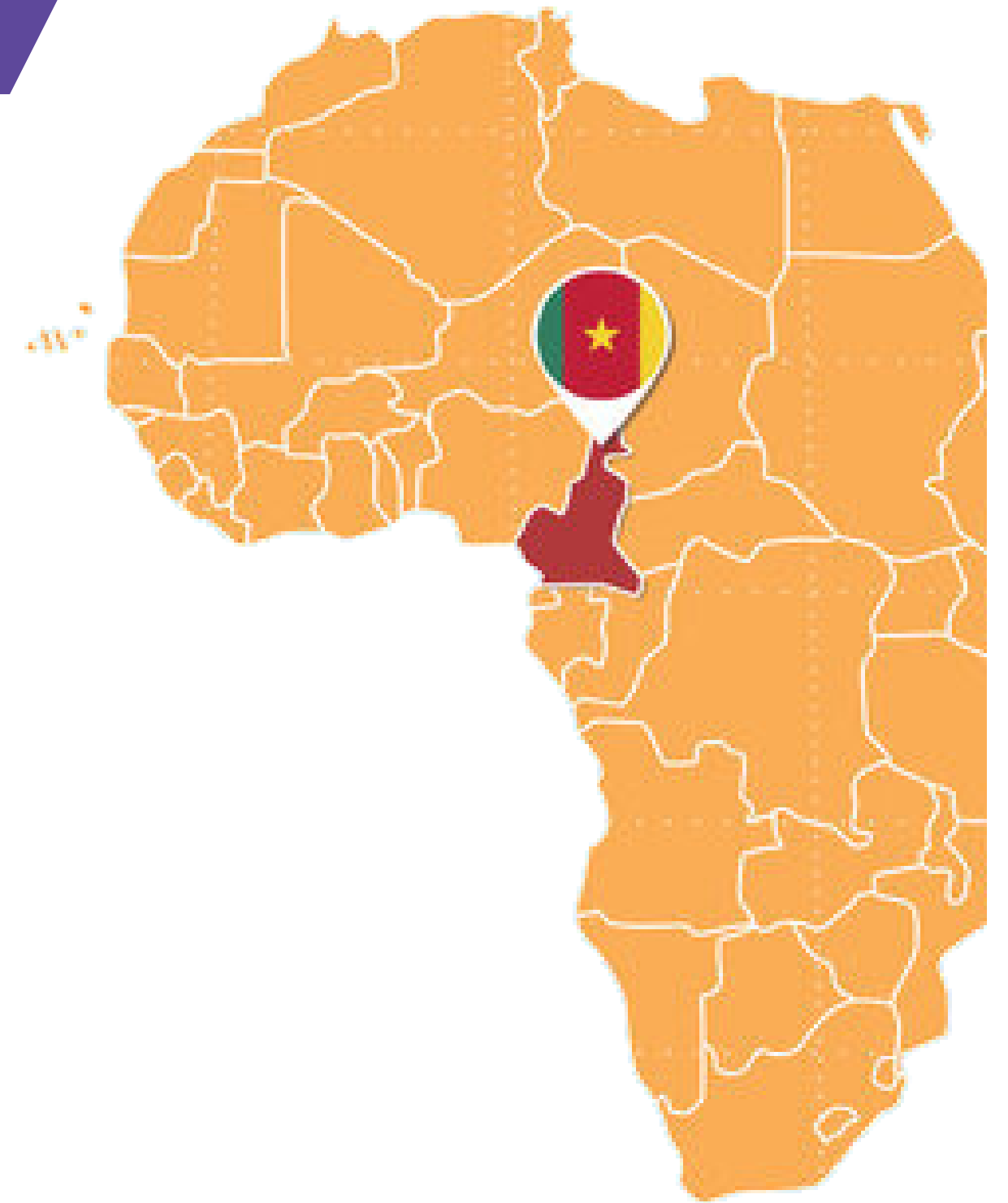
**Speaker: Lisa Zoller**

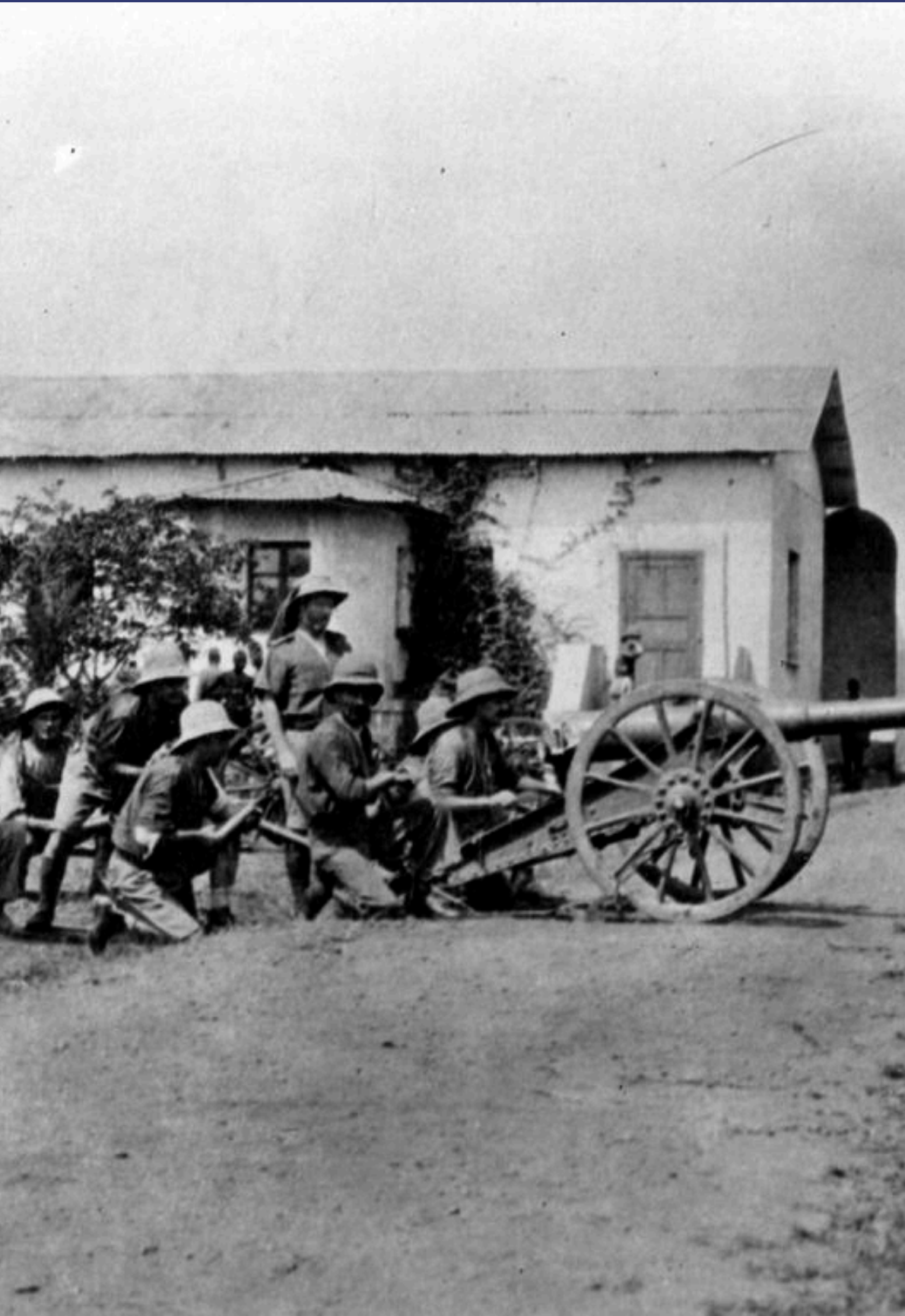
**Advisor: Dr. Margaret Griesse**



# Exploring the Struggles and Resilience of Cameroonian Women

- **Cameroon's Diversity:** Cameroon in West Africa, consists of over twelve million women representing diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, with English and French as the official languages.
- **Historical Context:** From the precolonial era to the present day, Cameroonian women have navigated a landscape marked by shifting political dynamics, economic structures, and cultural norms.
- **Theoretical Approach:** This analysis is approached through the lenses of feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and intersectionality.
- **Key Arguments:** The challenges faced by Cameroonian women are deeply rooted in colonial and patriarchal structures, perpetuated by historical legacies and contemporary socioeconomic and political systems.





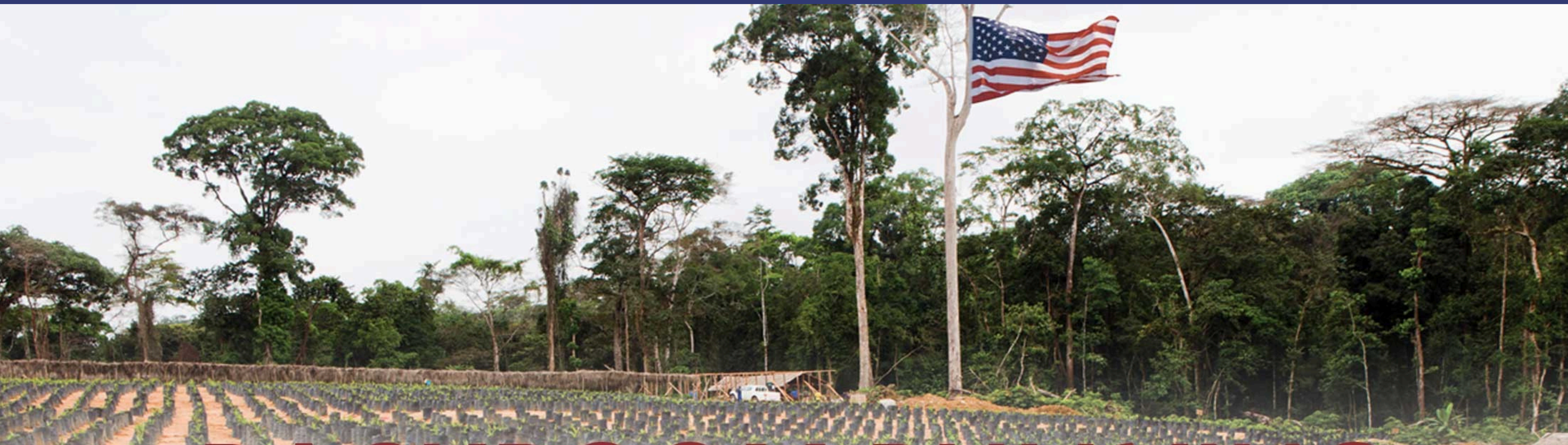
## Colonial Legacy and Historical Context

- **Precolonial Times:** Women held significant economic power alongside men.
- **Colonial Impact:** The introduction of patriarchal and capitalist structures undermined women's status and economic power.
- **1920s-1950s:** Women navigated social shifts from urbanization and colonial capitalism.
- **Underdevelopment and neo-colonialism:** Exploitation of women's labor, leading to increased dependency on men compared to pre-colonial times



# Continuation of Colonial Legacy: Land Rights Violations

- Patriarchal Laws restrict women's ability to inherit, own, and control land.
- Corporations exploit legal loopholes for land control.
- Women's well-being and food security are jeopardized without land control.



# Human Rights Violations Faced by Women and Girls

## Human Rights Violations

- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Reproductive rights violations
- Exploitation
- Denial of resources and opportunities
- Human trafficking
- Psychological and physical abuse
- Forced early marriage

## Impact of Anglophone Crisis

- Colonial divisions fuel demands for autonomy, escalating conflict
- Increased Sexual and gender-based violence, and denial of resources
- Displacement of women and girls
- Precarious masculinities lead to increased domestic violence.
- Women balancing new economic roles face heightened tensions and risks
- Conflict-induced fear intensifies domestic violence and brutal acts



**In 2023, 5 women were killed each month in Cameroon**

## Pursuit of Better Lives

- **Deceptive job opportunities abroad:** Promises of jobs overseas with false assurances of safe travel.
- **Dangerous journeys:** Many women risk their lives crossing the Sahara and Mediterranean, facing overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels.
- **Forced Domestic and Sex Labor:** Upon arrival, passports are confiscated and women are forced into domestic servitude or sex work.
- **Debt bondage:** Traffickers demand high sums for passage, trapping women in exploitative labor until debts are repaid, often lasting years.



# Intersectional Exploitation

- Current culture reinforces patriarchal norms, upholding male dominance and relegating women to subordinate positions.
- The historical legacy of colonization in Cameroon has led to enduring inequalities, marginalizing women.
- Patriarchal structures limit women's autonomy, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
- Socioeconomic factors such as poverty and limited opportunities exacerbate vulnerability.
- Exploitative individuals and organizations exploit economic disparities to prey on vulnerable women.
- Globalization and transnational networks facilitate exploitation, with trafficking networks taking advantage of porous borders.
- Weak legal enforcement and political instability in Cameroon create environments where exploitation thrives, with corruption exacerbating vulnerability.

# Transnational Movements and Solidarity

- Cameroonian women are key agents of change in peacebuilding efforts.
- Transnational movements and networks amplify Cameroonian women's voices.
- Digital activism, grassroots organizing, and cross-regional collaborations challenge oppressive structures.
- Efforts raise awareness about gender-based violence and promote women's rights globally.
- Empowering women to become self-sufficient through education, skills training, and access to resources.





# Making A Difference

- **Education and Awareness:** Understanding and addressing the challenges faced by Cameroonian women.
- **Digital Activism:** Using social media to amplify their voices and raise global awareness.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Supporting women-owned businesses and fair trade initiatives for sustainable opportunities.



**CSPPS**

Global network to support peacebuilding and statebuilding in fragil situations

[Cspps.org](http://Cspps.org)



**WEADA**

Women-led organization providing access to transformational socio-economic development

[Girlsnotbrides.org](http://Girlsnotbrides.org)



**AWEC**

Empowers women and awareness-raising initiatives in all spheres of life.

[Awecameroun.org](http://Awecameroun.org)



**HSR**

Advancing human rights, rule of law, access to justice, democracy, and peace in Cameroon and across Africa.

[Hisrcameroun.org](http://Hisrcameroun.org)



**ICAN**

Connecting women peacebuilders worldwide to share experiences and break isolation.

[Icanpeacework.org](http://Icanpeacework.org)



**WFAC**

Feminist advocacy organization that focuses on women's sexual and reproductive health rights, leadership, and development

[Wfaccameroun.org](http://Wfaccameroun.org)



THANK YOU