

# Prisons in Anglophone Cameroon: Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Prisoners

Sammy Besong Arrey-Mbi<sup>1</sup>, Michael Kpughe Lang (PhD)<sup>1\*</sup>, Nixon Kahjum Takor (PhD)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

DOI: [10.36348/sjhss.2022.v07i04.004](https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2022.v07i04.004)

| Received: 28.02.2022 | Accepted: 04.04.2022 | Published: 15.04.2022

\*Corresponding author: Michael Kpughe Lang  
The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

## Abstract

The Prison Service in British Southern Cameroons had a constitutional mandate to provide rehabilitation programmes with the goal of transforming the conduct and welfare of prisoners. To deliver this mandate, the Prison Service this article explores the transformation and rehabilitation of prisoners in the British Southern Cameroons prison service which incorporates various types of social and economic activities. The main focus is on the rehabilitation programmes which existed within the prison service between 1922 and 1992. The changes in the laws which necessitated these activities as well as how the prisons were organised to carry out these very important activities are examined. Because of the need to instill inmates with skills and entrepreneurial capacities aimed at facilitating their re-insertion into the society, the correctional institutions moved away from a punitive approach to rehabilitation. This paper discusses the various innovative transformation and rehabilitation programmes that were implemented and designed to enhance the offender's skills and to encourage their creativity and potentials. In collaboration with missionary societies and other agencies, the government rehabilitated prisoners through various programmes: skills development, psychological services, social work services, and spiritual care. The paper argues that while prisoners left the prison with development skills and knowledge that reduced reoffending and facilitated their reintegration into the community, the increasing number of inmates became over bearing on the resources that the government earmarked for the implementation of rehabilitation programmes.

**Keywords:** Anglophone Cameroon, prisons, rehabilitation, reintegration.

**Copyright © 2022 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## INTRODUCTION

British Southern Cameroons is the part of the territory that was administered by Britain after the defeat and ousting of the Germans out of the Cameroon protectorate in 1916. The German protectorate of Kamerun was partitioned into two unequal halves and the British took a fifth constituted as British Cameroon and the French had four-fifth referred to as French Cameroon. When the war ended, the international community recognised the partition and demanded Britain and France to administer their respective portions as mandate territories of the League of Nations. From 1922 Britain who had partitioned British Cameroons into British Northern and British Southern Cameroon integrated the two portions into Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria respectively. During this period, the people adopted some aspects of the Anglo-Saxon culture and tradition which included education, legal, administrative and penitentiary systems. The territory was also then called "Anglophone Cameroon".

This territory stretches from the bight of Biafra on the Atlantic Ocean to the River Donga in the North. It shares boundaries with Nigeria in the west and the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) in the east. It lays between latitude 2<sup>0</sup> N to 5<sup>0</sup> N of the Equator and latitude 8<sup>0</sup> E to 10<sup>0</sup> E of the Greenwich Meridian. The territory is estimated to measure about 750 kilometers long and 150 kilometers wide. It comprises of present day North West and South West Regions of Cameroon [<sup>1</sup>].

Before independence and reunification of this territory in October 1961, the detention, reformation, rehabilitation and transformation of inmates was the responsibility of the Southern Cameroons Prison

<sup>1</sup> A. Sammy Besong, "Dynamics of Transformation and Rehabilitation in Anglophone Cameroon Penitentiary Services, 1922-1992" (Forthcoming PhD Dissertation in History, the University of Bamenda, 2022), 84.

Service which was affiliated to the Nigerian prisons. This was so because Britain administered the territory as an integral part of Nigeria and used the Nigerian Prison Ordinance No. 21 of 30 May 1916 and the Prison Regulations of 1917 to administer the prisons. In 1961, following the transition from Southern Cameroons to West Cameroon within the framework of reunification with former French Cameroon which brought to existence the modern Cameroon state, a separate prison service was established [2]. This newly established West Cameroon Prison Service was charged with the responsibility of detention, reformation and transformation of inmates. The prison service performed this role until 1973 when Decree No. 73/744 of 11 December 1973 harmonised the West and East (Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon) prison systems. As part of the harmonized prison service, prisons in Anglophone Cameroon (successively former Southern Cameroons and West Cameroon) continued to provide rehabilitation programmes to offenders in the hope of checking reoffending and easing the reintegration of prisoners into their communities.

During the colonial, federal and unitary periods, successive governments enacted reforms relating to the transformation, rehabilitation and general welfare of detainees in this territory which for purposes of convenience is referred to as Anglophone Cameroon. However, insufficiency in funding and human resources downplayed the intent of the State and consequently, stakeholders and civil society organisations had to interpose. Within the ambit of this paper, prisons in Erstwhile British Southern Cameroons performed multiple tasks and had passed through stages of transformation and functions. Besong and Takor posit that a prison like the Bamenda Central Prison was a jail house (prison), became a production prison and later gained the status of Central Prison just like Buea [3]. They went further to say that the decision to involve inmates in their own transformation and rehabilitation was found in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules (UNSMRs) in Articles, 21, 22, 25, 26,37, 41, 42, 60, 62, 70(6), 72, 76, 77,78, 79, 81, and 89 and Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992 instituting prison administration in Cameroon [4]. These were viewed as good measures to facilitate the transformation and rehabilitation of inmates which was vital to the society

and the State at large. These measures aimed at correcting prisoners before their re-insertion into society. The State used the prisons as correctional institutions for inmates in various ways to align with the philosophy of preparing prisoners for their socio-economic and psychological transformation and rehabilitation. It was in the context of insufficiencies that agencies stepped in to contribute in the transformation and rehabilitation of detainees. Besides, the limitations of the State as the sole provider of transformative and reformatory activities gave space to stakeholders to step in to contribute towards the moral, physical and socio-economic transformation and rehabilitation.

The concern of this paper therefore, is to identify and assess the extent to the combined efforts of State actions and non-state organisations contributed to the project of transformation, rehabilitation and re-insertion of prisoners into society after release. The paper discusses the bases and modes of rehabilitation in prisons across Anglophone Cameroon. Particular attention is given to rehabilitation programmes such as skills development, social work services, psychological services, and healthcare. The challenges that stood on the path of rehabilitation are also discussed.

### Conceptual Issues

In order to ease the understanding of this work, it is important to explore the meaning of key concepts such as “prison” and rehabilitation”. The concept of prison according to Friedman is as old as the existence of man and has evolved over time and space [5]. This view is shared by Newman and Anderson who opine that; the existence of prison and use of confinement facilities is as old as the hills. And also went further to say that throughout history, facilities for the confinement of criminals have existed and various natural and manmade devices were used to keep prisoners [6]. They concluded that a prison is a correctional facility designed to keep those who had committed felony [7]. Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* sees prison as a microcosm of the outer society and where criminals are kept for control [8]. Goffman says prison represents a miniature of a self-

<sup>2</sup> Christian Pagbe Musah, “The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Unmasking Government’s Implication in the Radicalisation of the Crisis” *African Journal of History and Archaeology*, Volume 6, No. 1, (2022): 23.

<sup>3</sup> Sammy Besong and Nixon Kahjum Takor, “Socio-Economic Welfare Measures of Penitentiary Inmates in the Bamenda Central Prison(Cameroon), 1992-2013: A Historical Assessment” *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*, Volume 7, Issue 2, 2021, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence M. Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (Stanford California: Basic Books, 1993), 36.

<sup>6</sup> Donald J. Newman and Patrick R. Anderson, *Introduction to Criminal Justice 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (New York: Random House, 1989), 36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 679.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish the Birth of Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 238.

contained society [9], a place of temporal loss of rights to will money and in most cases the rights are permanently abrogated.

According to Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992 which organised the penitentiary system in Cameroon in its article I labels a prison as an institution for the detention of persons in custody awaiting trial, detention of persons sentenced by courts when found guilty, detention of persons being kept under surveillance [10] for preventive purposes especially those who could be a threat to the society or state. On his part, Mbeng describes a prison as a place where people accused of or condemned for crimes committed are kept in custody for a specific period during which they are re-educated to facilitate their rehabilitation and re-insertion into the society upon release [11]. Highlighting the efforts of John Howard a prison promoter of reforms in the eighteenth century she went further to say that; Howard through his activities ordered the construction of permanent penitentiary buildings in England where regulatory labour and religious instruction was attempted [12].

Pressure from humanitarians and philanthropists forced the governments of most nations all over the world to be more concerned with the management of prisons especially in the twentieth century. This resulted in the improvement of prison conditions away from the humiliation and cruel inhuman forms of punishment which most society accorded on crimes and criminals. Hill in his published work titled “the Prison Manual” assesses a prison as a correctional institution where convicts are kept and are transformed to acquire relevant skills, for re-integration into the broader society [13].

To Besong, a prison is a place for the confinement of those involved in crimes punishable by law [14]. This work therefore sees a prison as an institution in which criminals are confined and introduced to reformative and rehabilitative activities as a therapy to ward off crime in the inmates. In

<sup>9</sup> Ervin Goffman, *Asylum Essays on the Conditions of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates* (USA: Anchor Books, 1961), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992 Instituting Prison Administration in Cameroon, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Etarh Nyor Mbeng, “The Prison Service in West Cameroon 1961-1972: A Historical Appraisal (M.A. Dissertation, University of Buea, 2008), 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> G. Hill, *Basic Training. Material for Correctional Workers* (Cameroon: ISPAC 1996), 2.

<sup>14</sup> A. Sammy Besong, “Social and Economic Activities of Bamenda Central Prison Inmates 1924-2013 (Masters Dissertation in History, The University of Bamenda, 2018), 6.

“Dynamics of Transformation” Besong says transformation is the change that occurs in individual’s insight which awakens in the inmates a deep awareness of their intents within the community resulting in a genuine sense of social responsibility [15]. Transformation as used in this paper relates to changes in detainees’ behaviour within the prison. It pays attention to the indelible traits left on the lives of inmates, the prison institution and society through the activities of education and prison industry activities which took prisoners minds off crime.

Concerning rehabilitation, Groning and Anderson understand it as the development and initiation of correctional programmes within carceral establishments to deter criminal behaviour in regards to training as a measure designed to counter criminality. They go further to say it relates to the implementation of norms of morality and the support to inmate towards reintegration into the society [16]. According to Ebot, rehabilitation refers to the capacity building of inmates through education, craft, psychological training and other activities tailored towards inmates’ needs and wants [17].

Building on the above thoughts, this paper defines rehabilitation as the different articulations of correctional programmes with specific goals to be attained with underpinnings concerning changes in prisons and on prisoners. It is a treatment programme within the prison milieu to uplift inmates’ moral behaviour and attitudes and to transform them to persons capable of taking care of themselves and making useful contributions to their communities after their release. Prisons across Anglophone Cameroon, from the beginning of British colonial enterprise in 1922 to the institutionalization of the Unitary System in 1972 and beyond, accorded attention to rehabilitation which was anchored on policies that changed with time and circumstances. Irrespective of the context, rehabilitation in these prisons was intended to help and allow offenders to separate themselves from factors that exposed them to wrong doing. Providing prisoners the capacity to live a crime-free life upon release from prison was the main agenda of rehabilitation.

### **Contextualizing Rehabilitation in Anglophone Cameroon Prisons**

The need to improve prisoner’s behaviour both before their freedom and after release caused most

<sup>15</sup> Besong, “Dynamics of Transformation”, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Yanique A. Anderson and Linda Groning “Rehabilitation in Principle and Practice: Perspectives in Inmates and Officers” *Berger Journal of Criminal Justice*. Volume 4, issue 2016), 24

<sup>17</sup> Leonel Nyenti Ebot, 50 years old Administrator of Prisons and Superintendent of Kumba Principal Prison, interviewed by telephone, 15/03/2021.

governments around the world to introduce educational, vocational and psychologically oriented programmes as well as specialised services to handle specific problems of inmates. Amidst silence, isolation, labour and punishment; the nineteenth century prison reformers saw transformation as a means to cleanse and replace anti social behaviour of inmates with responsible attitudes that will also profit the communities. According to Irwin, if those who commit felony are kept in solitude to reflect on their sins they will change [18]. To corroborate the above idea, it was to promote greater safety within prisons and after release by reducing misconduct because it has been proven that without effective rehabilitation of inmates (especially youths) during incarceration, their transition from prison to the community will not be very smooth. Rehabilitation is thus important to connect inmates with the communities upon release. Youths between 20-30 years if not properly enabled were likely going to crime. Nye in agreement with Durkheim, Reiss and Toby says that most delinquent behaviour is the result for insufficient social control [19]. Thus if social and economic needs of inmates (juveniles especially) were met with through transformative and rehabilitation programmes, then the prison environment and receiving communities will be safe.

Prior to the introduction of transformative and reformatory programmes, it was uncertain with what the society might present to released prisoners. Thus in order to sharpen their skills and refine their agency in the areas of creativity and ingenuity and to allow them navigate easily through community huddles, it was necessary for rehabilitation to take place in the prisons of former British Southern Cameroons. Besong in support of mental health penologists says that progress through mental health transformation motivated inmates to interact freely in society after release [20].

Correctional programmes were introduced for the purpose of effective social and economic reintegration and to reduce recidivism. Recidivism refers to the chronic state of repetition of criminal and anti social behaviour. It is the return of the offender to criminal behaviour or punishment [21]. It is the most common measure of correctional programmes effectiveness or inefficiency in rehabilitative and transformative programmes. Thus displays ways to ensure effective reintegration of prisoners into communities through technical training and physical and psychological programmes. To Ngu, the emphasis

on transformation in prisons is primarily to protect society against crime by means of re-education, and to reduce recidivism [22].

More so, it was to utilise the human resources in prisons to increase the economic output of the State and engage inmates in national development. It was realised that everyone matters and were to be given the chance to play their part in economic development and nation building. The 1996 Cameroon constitution states in its preamble that, "Every person shall have the right and the obligation to work. Every person shall be in the burden of public expenditure according to his financial resources [23]". In this light there was no limitation made by the constitution as to persons deprived of their liberty, so it entails all citizens including those who have lost their liberty.

The desire to improve skills and impact prisoners with useful ideas provoked rehabilitation activities to be introduced in the prisons. Not all inmates came to prison with an existing skill or talent, so it was important for there to exist transformation and rehabilitation activities through which prisoners will be given diversified technical and vocational training to equip them prepare better after release. Those with innate skills and aptitudes were to be guided through these transformation activities to better their skills [24]. This responsibility was not the sole concern of the state but a combined effort including community agencies.

Some inmates by their pre-detention character could not stay indolent without carrying out some meaningful activities. Many given the limited access to social facilities and economic support structures had to engage in transformation and rehabilitation activities in the carceral institutions of former British Southern Cameroons as a coping strategy to self-support and empowerment. This was the case with Lukong who said; "I have never spent a day without doing something meaningful in my life and when I was sentenced in 1992, I begged the authorities of the Bamenda Central Prison to assist me with materials and tools to start producing Bamenda traditional dress *toghu* which I later got with help from other individuals. This helped me to support my family and also to raise money for myself" [25].

<sup>18</sup> J. Irwin, *Prisons in Turmoil* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ivan F. Nye, *Family Relationship and Delinquent Behaviour* (New York: Wiley, 1958), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Besong, "Dynamics of Transformation and Rehabilitation" 43.

<sup>21</sup> Besong "Social and Economic Activities", 91.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Asaah Ngu, 49 years old Administrator of Prison and Superintendent of Bamenda Central Prison interviewed at Upstation Bamenda, 13/08/2021.

<sup>23</sup> Law No. 96-06 of 18 January 1996 to Amend The Constitution of 2 June 1972.

<sup>24</sup> Besong, "Social and Economic Activities", 54.

<sup>25</sup> Didimus Lukong, 48 years ex-offender, interviewed in Bamenda, 02/09/2020.

A major plank to transformation and rehabilitation of inmates was to raise state revenue through prison labour. According to Decree No. 92/052 of March 1992, Article 51, 52, 53 and 54 [26] states that revenue was to be raised by each prison through sales of artistic products, provision of labour and sales of agro pastoral products such as chicken, pigs and rabbits". The purpose for rehabilitation and transformation is equally articulated in Prime Minister Muna's speech at the passing out ceremony of the sixth batch of the recruit warders of the police college in Mutengene in 1970. In his words:

The general duties of the prisons department include: training of prisoners in particular skills or trade, provision of labour to government and community of West Cameroon, generation of income [27].

To buttress the above statement of the Stateman, Mbeng pointed out some of the income generating activities in the Buea, Bamenda, Kumba and Mamfe prisons which contributed much to government coffers in the areas of block moulding, sand sales and others. The amount contributed to State treasury from 1962-1969 stood at 13,259,620 FCFA [28].

Workman posits that transformation of inmates in prisons was to equip prisoners with psycho-social restorative attitudes after release [29]. In order to enforce social rehabilitation and provide inmates with safe moral mentality as well as build their emotions and attitudes to embrace life in the future, transformation and rehabilitation of inmates in this area of study was necessary. Through this, punitive measures in the prisons were less pronounced and prisoners were engaged in prison programmes that brought vital changes in their lives. According to the 1962/1963 report, professional training was identified and there was a change for inmates who were regarded and branded as "grass cutter" to industrial work such as building works and tailoring [30].

### Implementation of Rehabilitation Programmes

The involvement of the State and non-statist stakeholders in penitentiary reforms was important given the fact that inmates needed social, economic as

well as psychological rehabilitation in the areas of re-education (formal) with academic subjects, vocational education and physical education. Besong argues that psycho-economic as well as psychological transformations were very important in the lives of inmates' transformation and rehabilitation [31]. To conform to the United Nation's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (UNSMRs) on the justification of the above document, the State and civil society actors came in with transformation and rehabilitation programmes in the prisons. The treatment of detainees was not only the responsibility of the State but that of other community agencies who supported the prison institutions through officers like social workers, psychologists, physical education instructors, nurses and doctors, as well as craft technicians.

In the 1970s and 1980s the general philosophy and mission of prisons changed all over the world and the prison services in former British Southern Cameroons also changed with transformation and rehabilitation becoming primordial. Foucauldians argue that transformation and reintegration of prisoners into the society should be the guiding principles of the penal system. This therefore ushered in Social Welfare instructors who functioned in the prisons of Buea, Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe and the Borstal Institute in Buea [32]. They gave counseling and re-education to young inmates as a means of treatment for other needs of juveniles who were delicate to handle. Social Affairs Delegations also were involved in prison matters. Fontebo opines that social welfare structures in Cameroon were not organized [33]. In 1985, this service made considerable progress in the intervention at certain levels to facilitate court proceedings especially in the Kumba Principal Prison for the juveniles who were in prison [34]. Social workers through the Ministry of Social Affairs worked with minors, aged inmates, women as well as the physically challenged. Besong argues that their real duties in these prisons were that of re-education and protection of persons classified as

<sup>26</sup> Decree No. 92/052 of March 1992 Instituting, 3.

<sup>27</sup> NAB, File No. F. 797/S. 1 Speeches by the Honourable Prime Minister: Speech by the Vice President of the Republic and Prime Minister of West Cameroon, His Excellency S.T. Muna, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1970., 14<sup>th</sup> June 1971, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Mbeng, Prison Service", 89.

<sup>29</sup> Kim Workman. "Rethinking Crime and Punishment. Prisoner Reintegration In New Zealand The 3<sup>rd</sup> Restorative Practices" International Annual Conference, 23-27 November 2011, Amora Hotel, Wellington, New Zealand, 2011, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Annual Reports 1962/1963, 14-15.

<sup>31</sup> A. Sammy Besong "Dynamics of Transformation and Rehabilitation in Anglophone Cameroon Penitentiary Services, 1922-1992 (Forthcoming PhD Thesis in History, the University of Bamenda 2022), 262.

<sup>32</sup> Borstal Institute in Buea was created in 1965 but functioned only in 1975. It was created with the main objective of separating juvenile offenders from adults and was to ensure the transformation, rehabilitation and reinsertion of young offenders into to society after release

<sup>33</sup> Helen Namondo Fontebo "Prison Conditions in Cameroon. The Narrative of Female Inmates" (PhD thesis in Sociology, the University of South Africa, 2013), 16.

<sup>34</sup> NAB, File No. Pf/a, 1984/IGSW.2/S.10, 487.

socially vulnerable by protecting their rights [35]. However, education in prison was regarded as both psycho-social and therapeutic measure and wider than the classroom activities. Theoretical and practical lessons were taught to trainees. Besong supporting Rothnan's argument that education was a subtle means of rehabilitation expose the fact that re-education was a beneficial criminogenic need which could provoke cognitive abilities and skills in inmates [36].

In 1952, warders in Buea Prison started adult education for prisoners to boost and repair the minds of inmates [37]. In conformity with the UNSMRs in its Article 77 which state that "... the education of illiterates and young prisoners shall be compulsory and special attention be paid to it by the administration" [38], the governments of West Cameroon and the United Republic of Cameroon and that of the Republic of Cameroon took formal education and vocational training seriously as strategies to lessen reoffending. As an aspect of transformation and rehabilitation, stakeholders and other agencies got involved and a lot of material donations were made to these prison institutions. Government caused vocational education to be part of the prisons under study. In 1983 for example, Reverend Father Nilen assisted by Reverend Brother Huub all of the Roman Catholic denomination founded the Bamenda Central Prison Juvenile Reformatory School (JRS) [39]. The school trained young offenders in general subjects and technical subjects such as building construction, tailoring, carpentry, motor mechanics and other trades [40].

The government took over the functioning of the school in 1989 but the Roman Catholic mission continued to support it with personnel (teachers) tools, books and other materials. Teachers were sent to the school by the State and though insufficient like the case of Buea prison, educated inmates were encouraged to teach the illiterate ones an activity that began in 1958 [41]. Morrison discloses that, vocational education in blacksmithing, shoe making, carpentry, tailoring, bricklaying and others easily met inmate's needs [42]. Pownall corroborates Morrison's view and says that

proper vocational training led to employment after release.<sup>43</sup> In Buea prison for example, the handicraft centers were used to teach trade to the prisoners [44]. Bamenda Prison also trained inmates in carving, bag and cap production while those in Kumba and Mamfe made baskets, sleeping mats and other items [45]. The 1962/63 Annual Reports on the prison service of West Cameroon identified professional training as the main function of the prison department [46].

In order not to have a mental and physical deterioration in the prisons, the State allowed psychologists, sociologist, and moralists to be part of prisons. Prison chaplaincy in former British Southern Cameroons prisons was an asset to the inmates and the chaplains provided life changing services to the prisoners through reconciliation and rehabilitation. This was in line with Foucault's argument that transforming the soul of a criminal was better than punishing the body. He went further to say that individuals when properly educated and trained, skills are coordinated and moral behaviour is improved [47]. Prison chaplaincy was also anchored on the SMRs Article 41(2) which says that "a qualified representative appointed or approved ... shall be allowed to hold regular services and pay pastoral visits in private to prisoners of his religion [48]. The text went further to say that access to a qualified representative of any religion should not be refused. The above article was supported by Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992 in its Article 42 which states that "the Superintendent shall draw up a list by name, of ministers of religion authorised to hold services inside the prison and visit prisoners.... [49].

Government zeal to have church ministers in the prisons was stalled by insufficient infrastructure to host this important activity and materials to facilitate soul transformation. The Roman Catholic Church (RCM), the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), the Baptist group, Full Gospel, Muslims (through the Imam) and the Church of Christ visited these penal institutions and donated bibles and other Christian literature, contributed financially to assist the prisoners,

<sup>35</sup> Besong. "Dynamics of Transformation and Rehabilitation", 269.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 201

<sup>37</sup> Cameroon Under the United Kingdom Administrative Report for 1953, 87.

<sup>38</sup> Standard Minimum Rules, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Besong "Dynamics of Transformation", 208.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Cameroon Under the United Kingdom Administrative Report for 1958, 209.

<sup>42</sup> N. J Morrison. The Effectiveness And Benefit Of Correctional Education. An Evaluation Of The Graper Correctional Program. *Canadian journal of Corrections*, 10(1968): 428-431.

<sup>43</sup> A.G. Pownall *Employment Problems Of Released Prisoners* (Washington DC. Manpower Administration U.S Department of Labour, 1969), 45.

<sup>44</sup> NAB, File no cf 1963/2, Economic And Political Reports For Victoria Division 1963/72: Situation Of The Penitentiary, 57.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Kumase Alumba, 84years retired chief warder interviewed at Ndamukong Street Bamenda, 15/02/2020.

<sup>46</sup> Annual report 1962/63, 14-15.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Disciples And Punish: The Birth Of Modern Prison* Translated By Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), 212.

<sup>48</sup> Standard Minimum Rules, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Decree No. 92/052, 10.

and carried out training programmes in the prisons of Buea, Mamfe, Kumba and Bamenda. In 1992 the RCM, started the construction of the chapel of the Bamenda Central Prison. Other Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and religious groups also supported the venture [50]. Richard Pefork of the PCC and Windle Kee of the Church of Christ were among the pastors that visited prisons especially the Bamenda Central Prisons. According to Sundt, chaplaincy was like medicine for the soul [51]. In effect chaplaincy fostered a sense of morality in prisoners.

Goffman notes that psychoanalyst services are inevitably important in every prison society [52]. Morgan in his report on recidivism pointed out that, improved mental health curbed re-offending [53]. The lack of medical care treatment, poor state of hygiene, food insufficiency caused many prisoners in most prisons around the world to solicit the assistance of stakeholders and former British Southern Cameroons was not left out. Health care as embellished in hygiene and sanitation embodied the health life of the incarcerated and individuals and groups gave their support in this area in terms of medications, equipment and other material things and sending their personnel to attend to some health needs of the inmates.

The prisons of Buea, Bamenda, Kumba and Mamfe did not fall short of Article 22(1) of SMRs which stipulated that "...there shall be available the services of at least one qualified medical officer". It provided that the medical service should be organised in close relationship with the general health administration of the community or nation [54]. This was also enunciated in Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992 Article 22(i) which says; "every prison shall have an infirmary.... [55]. Doctors visited the prisons to conduct routine medical checks and all incarcerated were examined on arrival in prison and their records kept and this was to know the health situation of each inmate so that inmates with contagious diseases could be isolated. Diseases like leprosy, chicken pox, measles, dysentery, small pox were to be checked to avoid its

spread in the prisons. It was for this reason that the "New Hope Village was created for lepers in Mbingo [56] and those in Kumba were settled at Mamyemen [57]. In cases of poor health of the inmates, the medical officers recommended special diet for the prisoners. According to the 1963/64 Annual Reports, "the medical officer recommended egg, meat and milk daily for prisoners with weight loss at the expense of the prison department" [58].

What the State provided for the infirmary was grossly insufficient and mostly (over the counter) medications for common illnesses like gastritis, common cold, fever and rabies which was prevalent since 1953 [59]. This could not meet the growing health needs and complexities of the inmates and they resorted to soliciting for outside assistance from non-governmental organization, family members and most often religious bodies (Roman catholic, Presbyterian) serious health cases were referred to the general hospital and some religious bodies negotiated to treat some inmates especially those with diseases were they have specialists and those who were their Christians. In the late 1980s and 1990, HIV and AIDS and other diseases like syphilis, chlamydia were common in the prisons. Besong however argues that depression and mental health issues were common with the inmates especially the women [60]. He went further to say that the aged in these prisons suffered from toothache arthritis and general body weakness [61].

### Impact and Challenges of Rehabilitation

The implementation of rehabilitation programmes in prisons across Anglophone Cameroon ameliorated the welfare of prisoners and transformed them in ways that eased their reintegration into the community. Following Article 37 of Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992, visits from relatives and friends helped inmates to tie social connections. Equally, State gave room for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other groups like the International Red Cross Committee (which visited BCP in 1992), the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedom, judicial professionals such as Lawyers and Jurists to be implicated in the welfare of inmates [62]. A social networking was created within the prisons environ among inmates especially during socio-cultural events

<sup>50</sup> James Epoh Awunge, Administrator of Prison, Assistant Social Welfare Officer and Office Head for Administrative Affairs and Records, Bamenda Central Prison, interviewed at Bamenda Central Prison, 13/03/2021.

<sup>51</sup> L. J Sundt, Bringing Light to Dark Places. An Occupational Study of Prison Chaplains (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, OH, 1997), 46.

<sup>52</sup> Ervin Goffman, *Asylum. Essays On The Conditions Of The Situation For Mental Patients And Other Inmates*(USA: Anchor books, 1961), 340

<sup>53</sup> Neil Morgan, Recidivism Rates And The Impact Of Treatment Programs OICS Report, September 2014, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Standard Minimum Rules, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992, 8.

<sup>56</sup> RAB, File No. B.99 Volume III.

<sup>57</sup> NAB, File No. JA/6/1950/1.

<sup>58</sup> Annual Report 1963/64, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Information on the Cameroon's Under The United Kingdom Administration 1953, 80.

<sup>60</sup> Besong "Dynamics of Transformation", 239.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>62</sup> Kenneth Lukong and Nde T. Peter, "Prisons and Prisoners" Rights and Obligations: An Overview of the Bamenda Central Prison in Cameroon" *African Journal of Social Sciences* Vol. 8, No 3, (2017): 23.

and it promoted and consolidated unity [63]. The collective engagements of NGOs and other humanitarian organisations modestly contributed in reducing the challenges that most of the inmates encountered as far as their socio-economic and psychological transformation and rehabilitation was concern.

According to Bafuh, schooling as part of measures to keep pace with the self-social development (re-education) in accordance with Article 62 of Decree No. 92/052 and in keeping with rule No. 59 of the UN Standard Minimum Rules (SMR) paid off [64]. Some prisoners obtained certificates like the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). Though it was a process enabled by the government, its vulgarisation was mostly done by social aid agencies like the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) and Faith Based Organisations (FBO) such as Catholic Health Association (OCASC) [65]. Some good-will individuals also donated didactic materials like books, pens and chalk to the Juvenile Reformatory School of the Bamenda Central Prison and the library [66]. Table 1 presents a statistical picture of the FSLC success rate from 1991-1992 in the Bamenda Central prison.

**Table 1: FSLC Registration and Results from 1991-1992**

Year of Examination	No. sat	No. passed	Percentage passed
1991	06	03	50
1992	03	01	33.3

**Source:** Extracted by author from booklets in the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education Record Office, February 2021.

This table exposes the results of FSLC candidates of BCP Juvenile Reformatory School for 1991 and 1992 sessions. In 1991 six candidates sat and three succeeded and scored 50% and in 1992 three sat and one succeeded scoring a percentage of 33.3%. Some of the inmates who had FSLC from prison were; Talla Justine Chashi, Ngwa A. Edward, Teneng Fonkam Emmanuel and others [67].

Rehabilitation made it possible for many inmates to be trained and some took their knowhow into

their communities after release [68]. Enoch Gustav and Shu Nathaniel in the 1980s and 1990 worked in Bamenda as mechanics after their release from prison [69]. Agbor Solomon was rehabilitated in Mamfe Town as a plumber [70]. The Institute for Agricultural Research and Development (IRAD), Heifer Project International (HPI) and the Veterinary Department gave technical assistance to inmates by training inmates on the art of keeping cattle, rabbits and pigs. A veterinarian followed up the training of inmates [71]. Some inmates specialised in animal breeding in Upper Farms Prison [72] and BCP distinguished themselves by raising a few animals in the prison purposely for domestic consumption and sale [73]. The Agricultural Department also taught inmates how to farm, rear cattle, nurse seedlings and compound food for chicken and animals. Some had personal gardens for cabbage and other greens. This provided a major source of income and employment for many upon discharge from prison [74]. Britain also gave technical assistance by training senior staff of prisons (in Wakefield) in England under a technical assistance arrangement offered by the United Kingdom Department of Technical Cooperation [75].

In the course of implementation and execution of these transformative programmes in these correctional institutions, many challenges probed up most notably inadequate personnel to train inmates, poor infrastructure most in a near state of dilapidation as these buildings were built in the German era and no amount of money spent on repairs could make them look modern. Bamenda prison for example by 1963 still had mud walls and that of Kumba was in a semi permanent nature [76]. There was need for infrastructure to accommodate the different activities. Lack of equipment, insufficient trained personnel, and health problems had great repercussions on inmate's activities.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the rehabilitation of offenders in Anglophone Cameroon prisons in view of ascertaining the extent to which this amounted to

<sup>63</sup> Gustav Enoch, 59 years ex-convict interviewed at Nkwen, Bayelle III, 11/10/2016.

<sup>64</sup> Vitalis Bafuh, 48 years, Director of Bamenda Central Prison, Juvenile Reformatory School interviewed at BCP, 13/02/2021.

<sup>65</sup> Reverend Father Joachim 60 years Catholic Prison Chaplain interviewed at BCP 10/03/2017.

<sup>66</sup> Fontebo, "Prison Conditions in Cameroon", 251.

<sup>67</sup> Besong, "Dynamics in Transformation", 318.

<sup>68</sup> Eric Chofor, 51 years, inmate sentenced for life imprisonment at the BCP, interviewed at BCP, 12/03/2021.

<sup>69</sup> Besong, "Dynamics in Transformation", 316.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> NAB, File No DC 700, Ref No. AB 1959, Annual Report Bamenda Division, 1959.

<sup>72</sup> Besong, "Dynamics in Transformation", 320.

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.Cam-info-net/article/bemenda-central-prison-512inmates,exhortedtolearn-trade168219.html> accessed 20/11/2016.

<sup>74</sup> Etchu Eyong, Warden in charge of Prisoners welfare Upper Farms Prison Buea interviewed at Upper Farms Prison, 11/08/2021.

<sup>75</sup> Annual Reports, 1962/63, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 22.

transformation and reintegration into the community. Inspired by some international and national legal instruments on human rights preservation and penitentiary welfare, rehabilitation in these prisons took the form of psychological assistance, skills development, social work, healthcare, and prison chaplaincy. The Government through the services of the Prison's administration committed attention to the provision of minimum welfare standards for inmates. By the 1960s and 1970s, prison operations had been remodeled the world over and those in Former British Southern Cameroons were not left out. This paper concludes that for the most part, government intervention in prison management helped in initiating inmates into activities that could train and psycho-socially transform them to lead relevant lives after detention. In spite of some considerable efforts, the state ran short of meeting the ever-increasing welfare, transformation and rehabilitation needs of inmates. To mitigate government insufficiencies, stakeholders and inmates improvised flexible survival strategies to enhance social and economic transformation. These initiatives for their own part could not be maximally attained because of inadequate technical, material and financial resources. It was principally to palliate the limitations of the state, assist the inmates to meet their desired goals and more importantly, fulfill their charitable and humanitarian missions that several non-state actors; NGOs, religious groups and philanthropists played an active role in offenders' rehabilitation. It therefore became evident through the concerted efforts of government, stake holders and inmates that the task of transforming and rehabilitating prisoners was a collective enterprise, and not a burden to be shouldered exclusively by government.

## REFERENCES

- NAB, File No F. 797/S.1 Speeches by the Honourable Prime Minister: Speech by the Vice President of the Republic and Prime Minister of West Cameroon, His Excellency S.T. Muna, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1970. 14<sup>th</sup> June 1971, 15
- NAB, File No. cf 1963/2, Economic and Political Reports for Victoria Division 1963/72: Situation of the Penitentiary.
- NAB, File No. DC 700, Ref. No. AB 1959, Annual Report Bamenda Division, 1959.
- NAB, File No. JA/6/1950/1
- NAB, File No. Pf/a, 1984/IGSW.2/S.10,
- RAB, File No. B.99 Volume III.
- Alumba, Kumase Peter. 84years retired chief warden interviewed at Ndamukong Street Bamenda, 15/02/2020.
- Awunge, Eph James. Administrator of Prison, Assistant Social Welfare Officer and Office Head for Administrative Affairs and Records, Bamenda Central Prison, interviewed at Bamenda Central Prison, 13/03/2021.
- Bafuh, Vitalis. 48years, Director of Bamenda Central Prison, Juvenile Reformatory School interviewed at BCP, 13/02/2021.
- Ebot, Nyenti Leonel. 50 years old Administrator of Prisons and Superintendent of Kumba Principal Prison, interviewed by telephone, 15/03/2021.
- Enoh, Gustav. 59years ex-convict interviewed at Nkwen, Bayelle III, 11/10/2016.
- Eric Chofor, Eric. 51 years, inmate sentenced for life imprisonment at the BCP, interviewed at BCP, 12/03/2021.
- Eyong, Etchu. Warden in charge of Prisoners welfare Upper Farms Prison Buea interviewed at Upper Farms Prison, 11/08/2021
- Lukong, Didimus. 48 years ex-offender, interviewed in Bamenda, 02/09/2020.
- Ngu, Asaah Henry. 49 years old Administrator of Prison and Superintendent of Bamenda Central Prison interviewed at Upstation Bamenda, 13/08/2021.
- Reverend Father Joachim, 60 years Catholic Prison Chaplain interviewed at BCP 10/03/2017.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish the Birth of Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977.
- Friedman, M. Lawrence. *Crime and Punishment in American History*. Stanford California: Basic Books, 1993.
- Goffman, Ervin. *Asylum. Essays on the Conditions of the Social Situation for Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. USA: Anchor Books, 1961.
- Hill, G. *Basic Training. Material for Correctional Workers*. Cameroon: ISPAC 1996.
- Irwin, J. *Prisons in Turmoil*. Boston: Little Brown, 1980.
- Newman, J. Donald and Anderson, R. Patrick. Introduction to Criminal Justice 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Random House, 1989.
- Ngoh, J. V. *Cameroon, 1884 to Present (2018): The History of a People*. Limbe: Design House, 2019.
- Nye, F. Ivan. *Family Relationship and Delinquent Behaviour*. New York: Wiley, 1958.
- Pownall, G.A. *Employment Problems of Released Prisoners*. Washington DC. Manpower Administration U.S Department of Labour, 1969.
- Wilson, David and Reuss, Anne. *Prison(er) Education Stories of Change and Transformation*. UK: Waterside Press, 2000.
- Besong, Sammy A. "Social and Economic Activities of Bamenda Central Prison Inmates 1924-2013. Masters Dissertation in History, the University of Bamenda, 2018.
- Besong, Sammy A. "Dynamics of Transformation and Rehabilitation in Anglophone Cameroon Penitentiary Services, 1922-1992. Forthcoming PhD Thesis in History, the University of Bamenda 2022.

- Fontebo, Namondo Helen. "Prison Conditions in Cameroon. The Narrative of Female Inmates". PhD Thesis in Sociology, the University of South Africa, 2013.
- Mbeng, Nyoh Etarh. "The Prison Service in West Cameroon 1961-1972: A Historical Appraisal. M.A. Dissertation, University of Buea, 2008.
- Sundt, J. L. Bringing Light to Dark Places. An Occupational Study of Prison Chaplains. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, OH, 1997.
- Anderson, A. Yanique and Groning, Linda. "Rehabilitation in Principle and Practice: Perspectives in Inmates and Officers" *Berger Journal of Criminal Justice*. Volume 4, Issue (2016)
- Besong, Sammy and Takor, Kahjum Nixon. "Socio-Economic Welfare Measures of Penitentiary Inmates in the Bamenda Central Prison (Cameroon), 1992-2013: A Historical Assessment" *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*, Volume 7, Issue 2, (2021): 24-38.
- Fanso, G. V. "Anglophone and Francophone Nationalism in Cameroon". Seminar Paper: Oxford University, 1996.
- [https://www.Cam-info-net/article/bemenda-central-prison-512inmates,exhorted to learn-trade 168219.html](https://www.Cam-info-net/article/bemenda-central-prison-512inmates,exhorted%20to%20learn-trade%20168219.html) accessed 20/11/2016.
- Lukong, Kenneth and Peter, T. Nde. "Prisons and Prisoners" Rights and Obligations: An Overview of the Bamenda Central Prison in Cameroon" *African Journal of Social Sciences* Vol. 8, No 3, (2017): 3-24.
- Musah, Pagbe Christian. "The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Unmasking Government's Implication in the Radicalisation of the Crisis" *African Journal of History and Archaeology*, Volume 6, No. 1, (2022): 22-38.
- Morrison, J. N. The Effectiveness and Benefit of Correctional Education. An Evaluation of the Graper Correctional Program. *Canadian Journal of Corrections*, 10 (1968): 428-431.
- Nfi, L. J. "The Anglophone Cultural Identity in Cameroon 50 years after Reunification, *International Journal of Advanced Research*, Volume 2, Issue 2, (2014): 121-129.
- Workman, Kim, "Rethinking Crime and Punishment. Prisoner Reintegration In New Zealand The 3<sup>rd</sup> Restorative Practices" International Annual Conference, 23-27 November 2011, Amora Hotel, Willington, New Zealand, 2011.
- Cameroon Under the United Kingdom Administrative Report for 1953.
- Cameroon Under the United Kingdom Administrative Report for 1958.
- Information on the Cameroon's Under The United Kingdom Administration 1953.
- Neil Morgan, Recidivism Rates And The Impact Of Treatment Programs OICS Report, September 2014.
- West Cameroon Prison Service Annual Reports, 1962/63.
- West Cameroon Prison Service Annual Report 1963/64.
- Decree No. 92/052 of 27 March 1992 instituting prison administration in Cameroon. Law
- No. 96-06 of 18 January 1996 to Amend the Constitution of 2 June 1972. United Nations
- Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners adopted by the first United Nations
- Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Geneva in 1955 and Approved by the Economic and Social Council by its Resolutions 663C (XXIV) of 31 July 1957 and 2076 (LXII) of May 1977.