

Local Governance and Transformative Initiatives in Kumbo Municipality (Cameroon): 1977-2013

Aloysius Nyuymengka Ngalim^{1*}, Tatah Emmanuel Mengnjo²

¹Associate Professor, Department of History and African Civilisations, University of Buea, Cameroon

²PhD Student, Department of History and African Civilisations, University of Buea, Cameroons

DOI: [10.36348/sjhss.2024.v09i04.001](https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2024.v09i04.001)

| Received: 14.02.2024 | Accepted: 23.03.2024 | Published: 01.04.2024

*Corresponding author: Aloysius Nyuymengka Ngalim

Associate Professor, Department of History and African Civilisations, University of Buea, Cameroon

Abstract

The study examines the pivotal role of local government in fostering transformative initiatives in Kumbo Municipality and their broader developmental impact. Despite numerous studies on local governance, there is limited established information on transformative initiatives. The study employs qualitative methods, including interviews and desk research. While acknowledging certain accomplishments in life-transforming endeavours, the paper contends that these achievements remain quantitatively inadequate relative to the pressing needs of the community, and the pace of progress is notably sluggish. The findings reveal that certain projects have proven ephemeral due to issues in conception, implementation, and maintenance. Additionally, the study reveals a significant gap between the idealized vision of decentralization enshrined in Cameroon's 1996 constitution and the reality on the ground, as local government institutions haven't been effectively empowered. Urgent reforms are imperative for local governance to catalyze positive change, necessitating a steadfast adherence to the autonomy principles articulated in the constitution. Only through such comprehensive reforms can local government evolve into an effective instrument for transformative development in Kumbo Municipality.

Keywords: Kumbo Municipality; Local Governance; Decentralization; Transformative Development; Implementation Challenges; Cameroon.

Copyright © 2024 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

At independence, many African states adopted a strong centralized system of governance. After more than half a century of state intervention through a top-down development approach, most states failed to meet the basic human needs of the people. Rising expectations only converged on destructive frustrations, alienation, abject poverty, and despair. As a result, many African countries and Cameroon faced many problems in meeting the socio-economic development of its people [1]. After independence, many of these states faced problems ranging from unemployment, rural exodus, inadequate infrastructure, lack of portable drinking water, inadequate healthcare systems, and weak educational institutions, affecting the people negatively. The high population growth rates in these areas further compounded the problems. Thus, a heavy reliance of

most governments on foreign aid to overcome these problems. As a result of this, the need for education and empowerment of the local population on their rights and how to improve their livelihood were some of the driving forces behind the emergence of a new bottom-top development approach in Cameroon and the North West Region.

The transition from a centralized to a liberal system of governance saw the introduction of decentralization in Cameroon. The government began to encourage the use of public-private partnerships and Non-Governmental Organizations in former public functions as well as encouraging the participation of citizens in the formation and implementation of policies [2]. This laid the foundation for local governments to gain power and legitimacy in delivering services,

¹ Andre Riccardo, *Reconciling Top-down and Bottom-up Development Policies* (London, LSE Research Publishers, 2011), 1.

² Aloysius Nyuymengka Ngalim, "Local Government, Infrastructural Provision and Sustainable Development

in Fako Municipalities of Cameroon's South West Region" *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, (Volume 16, No.5,2014).

development, and life-transforming activities within their localities. Despite the slow process of decentralization in Cameroon, local government institutions have the power to initiate development activities that will transform the lives of people within their localities [3].

Historical Background of Kumbo Municipality

The Kumbo Council was created in 1977, out of the defunct Nso Area Council, which was created from the southwestern federation, with headquarters in Ndop. At the time of its creation, the late Bernard Bruno Wirnkar was elected Mayor. Ntani Daniel succeeded him in 1991 and ruled the council till 1996 when the Social Democratic Front took over, and Njong Fonyuy Donatus was elected. He has ruled the council as Mayor since 1996. Before the council's creation, his Royal Highness the Fon of Nso, Sehm Atar, administered the council area with assistance from the Fons of Oku, Mbiame, Nseh, Nkar, and Ndzeen. These Fons had a common council presided at by the Fon of Nso, where they planned and made rules to keep away all evils from their various Fondoms. All the Fons in Bui were members. Each Fon respected his position and there was no power wrangling. They lived in harmony with each other [4].

Conceptual Issues

Definitions of local government vary from one country or political system to another. This is the case for instance with Britain, France, America, and Chinese systems. Instead of searching for a generally accepted or watertight definition, it would be more useful to review some common definitions of local governments.

Local Government

Lockard defines local government as a public organization authorized to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within a relatively small territory which is a sub-division of a region or national government. Local government is at the bottom of a pyramid of governmental institutions, with the national government at the top and the intermediate governments (states, regions, provinces) occupying the middle range. Local government has general jurisdiction and is not confined to the performance of one specific service function [5].

In the British context, "local" is generally accepted as being large enough to provide several major services such as education housing, and environmental

amenities that are often the focus of local government elsewhere. Hampton states that there is the tricky problem of defining government in the context of local government. This is mainly because local authorities are often not sovereign entities or bodies. Unlike the nation-state, they have no original powers of legislation [6]. Even though it is difficult to have a watertight definition of local government, Professor Hampton summarizes the meaning of local government in British as follows: First, local authorities have a clearly defined physical structure. That is, they have geographical boundaries that are contiguous but do not overlap. No part of the country is either excluded from local government or included in the territory of two local authorities at the same status. Secondly, local authorities are multi-purpose bodies responsible for mini services. The term local government does not usually include, as in some countries, elected bodies for only one service. Thirdly, local councils are directly elected on a similar, though not identical franchise to that used for parliamentary elections. Fourthly, local government has an independent power although carefully circumscribed of raising taxation [7]. These four characteristics enable us to distinguish local government from other agencies that provide services in local areas. The definition of local and local government and the four characteristics of local government outlined above generally constitute or embody the conceptualization of local government within the commonwealth [8]. For this study, Professor Hamton's definition of local government is adopted.

The UN Office for Public Administration defines local government as a political sub-division of a nation or a federal state system, which is constituted by the law and has substantial control of local affairs including the powers to impose taxes or to control labour for prescribed purposes. According to the UN, the concept of local government is multi-dimensional, encompassing various aspects such as social, economic, political, geographical, and administrative dimensions. This holistic view underscores the complexity and importance of local governance in fostering development and addressing the needs of communities. Transitioning to the next section, we will delve into the laws on local government reforms, examining how these dimensions are translated into policy and practice in the context of Kumbo Municipality, Cameroon, from 1977 to 2013.

³ Ibid

⁴ Interview with, Ibrahim Yunfenyuy, 50 Years old, Fourth Deputy Mayor, Kumbo, 21st Nov 2017,

⁵ Jean-Guy Finn, *Building Stronger Local Government and Regions: An Action Plan for the Future of Local Governance*, (London: George Allen, 2008), 96.

⁶ Bobuin John Gemandze, *Issues in Local Government Theories, Principles and Practices*, (Buea: Trinity Ventures, 2009), 4-6.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Bobuin John Gemandze, *Issues in Local Government Theories, Principles and Practices*, (Buea: Trinity Ventures, 2009), 4-6.

Laws on Local Government Reforms

The evolution of local government structures in Cameroon has been marked by significant reforms, particularly in the wake of the country's transition from a federal state to a united nation in 1972. These reforms, culminating in the council reforms of 1974, fundamentally reshaped municipal institutions, leading to the creation of urban and rural councils aimed at promoting development and life-transforming activities. This section explores the legislative framework and the impact of these reforms on local governance in Cameroon, focusing on the period from 1977 to 2013. The laws on local government reforms empowered councils to promote development and life-transforming activities in different localities. Municipal institutions changed completely in 1972 when the political and administrative situation of the country changed. Cameroon changed from a federal state to a united nation with one flag, one constitution, and a single party. These administrative and political changes gave room for the council reforms of 1974 which reorganized the councils as follows. Urban councils with special status in Yaoundé, Douala, and Nkongsamba were maintained in their structure. All the councils in East Cameroon were maintained in their structures and form. The 24 area councils or local councils that existed before then were transformed into special status, urban and rural councils [9]. Therefore, in the present North West and South West Regions, four urban councils were created in Bamenda, Kumba, Kumbo, and Limbe and 30 rural councils spread over the two regions [10]. Bamenda urban council was later transformed into a special status urban council. From 1977, the creation of councils in the Republic became rapid and the number increased between 1992 and 1995. By April 1995, the group of councils in Cameroon grew to 339, with the addition of 64 new councils. This total included two city councils, situated in Yaoundé and Douala respectively. Within these city councils, there were 20 urban councils, with nine holding special status and 306 rural councils.

The 1974 Law in Cameroon aimed to comprehensively regulate all aspects of local government administration and management, particularly evident in articles 28-44, which detail the internal functioning of municipal councils. It is essential to analyze the roles and powers of municipal councilors and mayors, as they are key figures at the local

government level. The law delineates three categories of local government authorities: rural councils for rural areas, urban councils for urban and semi-urban areas, and delegations for cities [11]. By 1974, there were six delegations in the country, including Yaoundé, Douala, Bamenda, Nkongsamba, Kumba, and Limbe. A notable feature of a delegation was the dual nature of its executive organ, comprising an elected mayor and a government delegate who represented the central government. Legally, the elected mayor's role was limited to presiding over council sessions, while all executive and ceremonial functions were carried out by the government delegate. Mayors of Rural Councils were appointed by the central government, while those of urban councils were elected by councilors, subject to confirmation by the central government [12].

According to the 1974 law, local authorities or councils consist of a decision-making or deliberating body and an executive body [13]. The decision-making body was a representative organ and the supreme policy-making body of the councils. The municipal council, composed of councilors elected for a five-year term through universal suffrage, was empowered by law to manage all council affairs and make decisions on political, economic, budgetary, and taxation matters within its jurisdiction. This included tasks such as electing mayors and their deputies, adopting the council budget, approving the council's management and administrative accounts, approving loan agreements, accepting gifts and legacies, approving master plans for urban/city development, and adopting names for streets and public squares.

The executive organ of the council was another significant body, comprising a mayor assisted by deputies, the number of which was determined by law based on the population of the council area (refer to Table 1). The mayor held executive authority and played a crucial role in policy formulation and implementation within the council. The 1974 law meticulously outlined the powers and duties of mayors, which included authorizing council expenditure, ensuring public law and order within the council's jurisdiction, maintaining council infrastructure and staff, and executing or implementing resolutions or decisions made by the council [14].

⁹ Law N^o 74/23 of December 1974 to organize councils.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Bobuin John Gemandze, *The Failure of Decentralization Policy in Cameroon: An Analysis of the 1974 Law on Local Government Reforms*, (Buea, Trinity Ventures, 1994), 50.

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Law No 74/23 of December 1974 to Organize Councils.

¹⁴ Law No 74/23 of December 1974 to Organize Councils.

Table 1: Composition of the Executive Organs of Local Government Authorities According to the 1974 Law

Types of Local Councils	Executive Organ	No. of Deputies	Population
Urban	Mayor	2	Up to 50,000
		3	50,001-200,000
		4	Above 200,000
Rural	Municipal Administrators	2	Up to 50,000
		3	50,000 – 100,000
		4	Above 100,000

Source: Adopted from the 1974 Law on Local Government

A cursory examination of the powers and responsibilities of the decision-making and executive bodies of local authorities might suggest that these bodies were granted extensive powers for formulating and executing local government policies. However, municipal officials were subject to strict oversight by supervisory authorities, as stipulated in articles 8 and 9 of the 1974 law and decree No 77/91 of 25 March 1977. Article 8 of the 1974 law specifies that the State, represented by the Ministry of Territorial Administration, its governors, and prefects, shall exercise general supervision over councils and council unions [15]. This hierarchical structure of supervisory authorities included prefects, whose authority was confined to a division; governors, whose jurisdiction encompassed the entire province; and the Minister of Territorial Administration, whose authority extended over the national territory.

As a result, local councils in Cameroon faced challenges in functioning effectively due to their lack of local government authority, a crucial component for ensuring their smooth operation. This issue is highlighted by the relationship between the decision-making and executive bodies of the council under the 1974 law and the hierarchy of supervisory authorities, suggesting that the autonomy of councils mentioned in Article 1 of the 1974 law was more theoretical than practical [16]. For example, according to Article 23 of the 1974 law, the municipal council could be dissolved by decree and suspended by supervisory authorities. Additionally, the supervisory authorities had the authority to determine which matters should be deliberated by the council. Even after deliberations, the council's resolutions had to be approved by the supervisory authority before implementation, and the supervisory authority could request the council to review its decisions. Such stringent control over local councils impeded their functioning.

The powers of the mayor in personal matters were limited too. Article 65 of the 1974 law provides that the mayor should make appointments to council posts,

provided that the secretary generals shall be appointed by the supervisory authority. This resolution was reinforced by Article 33 of the 1974 law which stipulates that the draft decisions to employ, advance, or dismiss council staff shall be subject to prior approval by the prefects. Article 34 stated that the minister of territorial administration, the governor or the prefect may when appropriate; automatically take the place of the mayor if he refuses after formal notification to put into effect an act prescribed by the hierarchy [17]. Also, the executive organ of the council was under strict central government control. This is because the mayor was to exercise his functions under the control of the supervisory authorities and competent state bodies. Similarly, the decision of the mayor was forwarded to the supervisory authority by the registered post, and it could only be implemented after the said authority had approved it. These limitations of the 1974 law significantly impeded the functioning of local councils in Cameroon [18]. Transitioning to the 2004 reforms in local government, it is important to note that the 1996 constitution declared Cameroon a decentralized unitary State.

The 2004 Reforms on Local Government

The 1996 constitution stated that Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State. Article One of the constitution states that the decentralization process in Cameroon shall be progressive. In 2004, the government of Cameroon came up with a law on the orientation of decentralization and according to this law, the councils and regions shall be decentralized local authorities. This law empowered the councils to promote development in their localities. There was devolution of powers to councils accompanied by the transfer of financial, material, and human resources to local entities that are made up of 10 regions and 360 councils. The law equally holds that the president of the republic can by decree create or delimit the geographical boundaries of the local authority as well as rename or decide on the temporal regrouping of local authorities [19]. In addition to the president's authority to create or modify local authority boundaries, Article 4(1) of the 2004 orientation law

¹⁵ Law No 74/23 of December 1974 to Organize Councils

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Bobuin John Gemandze, *The Failure of Decentralization Policy in Cameroon: An Analysis of the*

1974 Law on Local Government Reforms, (Buea: Trinity Ventures, 1994), 56.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Law No 2004/018 of July 22 on the Orientation of Decentralization.

outlines the responsibilities of local authorities in Cameroon.

Article 4(1) of the 2004 orientation law stipulates that local authorities in Cameroon are tasked with promoting economic, social, health, education, cultural, and sports development. The law devolves powers related to development in these sectors to local authorities under the conditions specified in Articles 18-24 of rules applicable to regions and Article 22 of rules applicable to councils. By this law, councils are mandated to promote economic, social, health, cultural, and sports development by developing local agricultural, pastoral, handicraft, and fish farming activities, constructing, and managing markets, bus stations, and slaughterhouses, organizing trade fairs, and supporting income and job-generating micro projects. They are also responsible for civil status registration, establishing, equipping, managing, and maintaining council health centers, nursery, and primary school establishments, participating in the procurement of school supplies and equipment, promoting literacy education, technical, and vocational training, coordinating sports and youth activities, constructing and managing municipal stadia, sports centers, playgrounds, and arenas, as well as organizing cultural weeks, traditional cultural events, and literary and artistic competitions at the local level [20].

Just like the 1974 law, the activities of these elected local entities are overseen by the representative of the supervisory authorities, that is, the Governors and the Senior Divisional Officers at the level of regions and divisions respectively. This can be seen in articles 46-57 of the orientation laws. The senior divisional officer exercises the supervisory authority of the state over councils. The local officials are not only accountable to the electorates but also to the chief executive of the state. The latter could dismiss an elected official for embezzlement as stated in Article 95 (1) of the orientation law. This has equally put the autonomy of local councils into question. This is because they are not free to function without the frequent intervention of the supervisory authorities. This has hindered the decentralization process and the smooth functioning of local councils in Cameroon [21].

The only slight difference between the 1974 and 2004 laws on local government is that some ministries like that of agriculture, basic education, social welfare, culture, and women empowerment have transferred part of their competencies to councils to carry out development activities within their respective localities. Also, to increase dialogue over municipal issues, there

are four statutory meetings, unlike two under 1974 laws. Local authorities are empowered to undertake decentralized cooperation and form union councils (article 131 of the orientation law). In democratic practice within the organs of local authorities, a quorum of two-thirds of the membership is required for a municipal council meeting to be held. Decisions for a council meeting are taken by a simple majority vote and as a rule [22].

However, one can argue that the decentralization laws in Cameroon have been unsuccessful in empowering the local authorities. These laws appear to have instead disempowered them by strengthening local power brokers or state agents. In Cameroon, there is a highly interventionist state apparatus that remains under the tight control of the administrative agents deployed by the state. This is personified in appointing government delegates and district officers whose overriding prerogative appears to be the maintenance of law and order. The result of such interventionist policies is institutionalization in political structures and practices that undermine the authority of locally elected council officials such as mayors and councilors [23]. Having reviewed the 2004 Reforms on Local Government, aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local governance in Kumbo Municipality, our attention now turns to the revenue sources accessible to the Kumbo Council.

Sources of Revenue to Kumbo Council

After exploring the 2004 Reforms on Local Government, which aimed to enhance the effectiveness of local governance in Kumbo Municipality, we now turn our attention to the sources of revenue available to the Kumbo Council. Understanding these revenue streams is essential for assessing the council's financial capacity to implement developmental projects and initiatives. The revenue sources of the Kumbo Council are categorized into two main sections. The first section comprises taxes, which are a significant income source for the council. These taxes include discharge tax, business licenses, liquor licenses, property transfer fees, forest royalties, automobile stamp duty, property tax, vehicle stamp duty, taxes on games of chance and entertainment, additional council tax, and local development tax. Notably, forest royalties and automobile stamp duty are collected nationally by FEICOM and distributed to councils based on population, reflecting the uneven distribution of these resources across regions. The second section consists of proceeds from council taxes, which encompass cattle slaughter fees, hygiene and sanitation fees, market fees, building permits, parking taxes, fees for the temporary

²⁰ Law No 2004/018 of July 22 on the Orientation of Decentralization

²¹ *Ibid*

²² Law No 2004/018 of July 22 on the Orientation of Decentralization.

²³ Interview with, Wirnkar Boniface, 65 years old, Former Mayor, Kumbo, 17th Dec 2016.

use of public highways, entertainment fees, transhumance tax, transit tax, fees for transporting quarry products, parking lot fees, occupation dues, and communal cattle tax, among others [24].

Another significant source of revenue for councils is income derived from various sources such as building rents, deductions for housing occupied by agents, deductions for personnel transport, hall and truck rentals, machinery and immovable property rentals, water and electricity transfers, proceeds from farm or service franchises, monument, and site development dues, library revenues, revenue from service points, advertising revenue, graveyard franchise proceeds, and

garage transfers, among others. In addition, councils receive income from rebates and royalties granted by the state, financial income from loans, operating allocations from the state, miscellaneous gains from transfers, investment revenue, capital, and investment grants, long- and medium-term borrowing, and other long- and medium-term liabilities. These various sources of income enable councils to engage in development and life-transforming activities [25]. Table 2 presents a comparative analysis of the budget, revenue collection, and capital investment in the Kumbo Council from 2008 to 2013. The table includes data on budgetary allocation, revenue collected, revenue expenditure, and capital investment during this period.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Budget, Revenue Collection, and Capital Investment in Kumbo Municipality (2008-2013)

Year	Budget	Revenue Collected	Revenue Expenditure	% Revenue Expenditure	Capital Investment	% Capital Expenditure
2008	655436800	657982469	625738896	95.5	395242092	60.3
2009	736759900	432633069	432321120	58.7	150550026	20.4
2010	847550000	429783539	429756536	50.7	172425804	20.3
2011	717550000	405123426	405120831	56.5	139192281	19.4
2012	693500095	588481032	526212634	75.9	186183485	26.8
2013	736506561	696708734	651482158	88.5	227928274	30.9

Source: Data Collected from Kumbo Council, August 2016

Table 2 shows that the average allocation to capital investment from 2009-2011 was low. It increased from 26.8% in 2012 to 30.9% in 2013. On the other hand, revenue expenditure experienced a decline, that is, from 95.5% in 2008 to 58.7% in 2009 and 50.7% in 2010. The council experienced an increase in revenue expenditure

in 2011 which stood at 56.5%, 75.9% in 2012, and 88.5% in 2013. This shows that a large proportion of expenditure between 2009 and 2011 was on public administration rather than on capital investment. Figure 2 shows the trends in capital investment in Kumbo Municipality from 2008-2013.

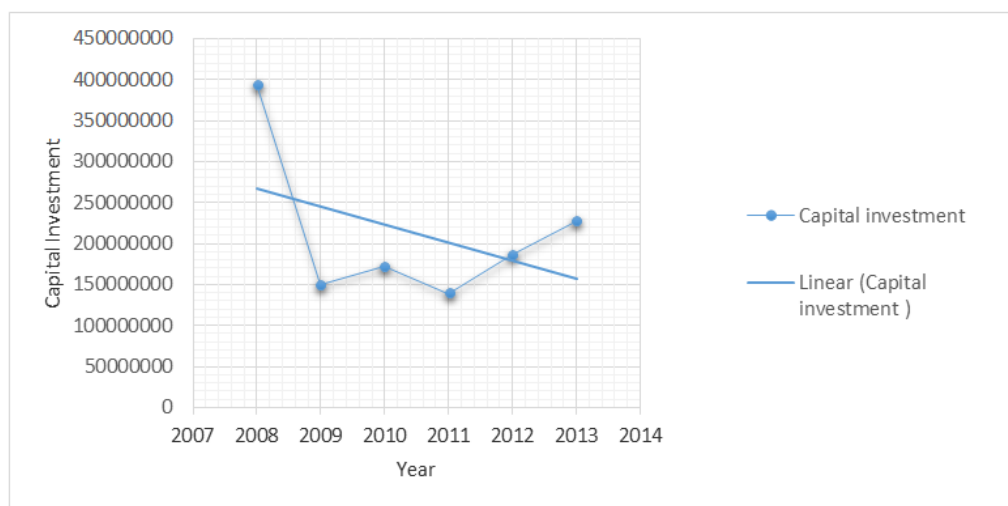


Figure 2: Capital Investment in Kumbo Municipality
Source: Data Collected from Kumbo Council, August 2016

Figure 2 illustrates a decline in capital investment from 2009 to 2010, followed by a consistent

increase from 2011 to 2013. The decrease in capital investment between 2009 and 2010 can be attributed to

²⁴Interview with, Edward Fon, 40 years old, Finance Officer, Kumbo, 21st Nov. 2017.

²⁵ Ibid

higher expenditure on salaries, administrative, and public services compared to the subsequent years. Figure

3 depicts the revenue expenditure trends of the Kumbo Council from 2008 to 2013.

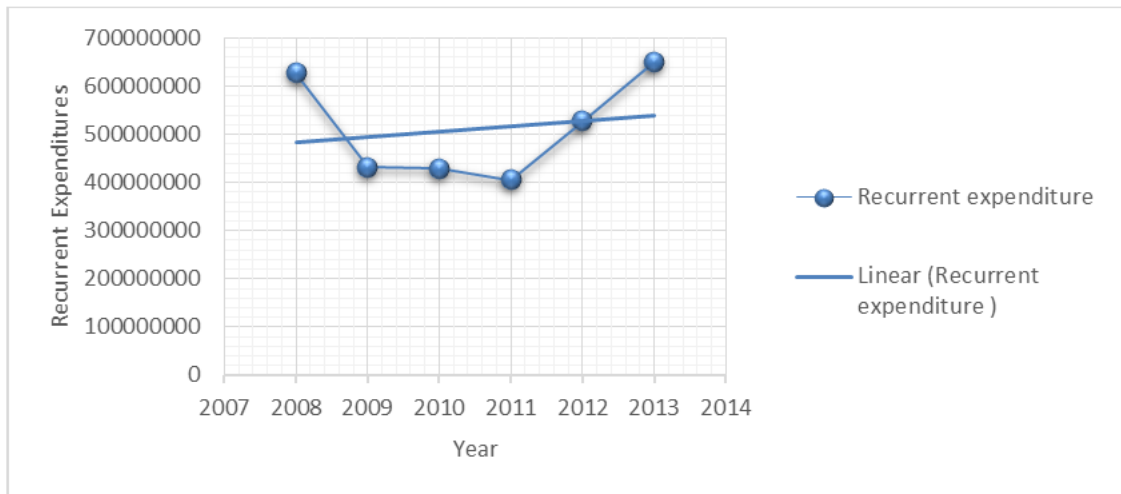


Figure 3: Revenue Expenditure in Kumbo Municipality
Source: Data Collected from Kumbo Council, August 2016

Figure 3 illustrates the revenue expenditure trends of the council, indicating a decrease from 2009, which recorded 58.7%, to 50.77% in 2010, compared to 95.5% in 2008. Subsequently, there was an increase in revenue expenditure, with a rise of 56.5% in 2011, 75.9% in 2012, and 88.5% in 2013. The decrease in revenue expenditure between 2009 and 2010 can be attributed to a decline in revenue collected during that period. The subsequent years saw an increase in revenue collection, leading to a corresponding rise in revenue expenditure. Thus, the trends in revenue expenditure, as depicted in Figure 3, are intricately linked to the municipality's life-transforming activities. The decrease in revenue expenditure between 2009 and 2010, attributed to a decline in revenue collected, underscores the financial challenges that may have impacted the implementation of transformative projects. However, the subsequent increase in revenue expenditure from 2011 to 2013 indicates a potential resurgence in funding availability, potentially enabling the council to embark on more ambitious developmental initiatives.

Kumbo Municipality and Life-Transforming Activities

Now that we have explored the legal framework and revenue sources shaping local governance in Kumbo Municipality, the focus now shifts to examining the municipality's engagement in life-transforming activities. This section will explore crucial aspects such as agriculture, infrastructure development (including roads, markets, and bridges), and education. Through an analysis of these transformative initiatives, we aim to develop a comprehensive understanding of the

municipality's developmental trajectory during the study period outlined in the article.

Agriculture

Agriculture serves as the economic cornerstone of Kumbo municipality, with its promotion intended to catalyze transformative impacts on livelihoods, mitigate rural exodus, and enhance the living standards of rural inhabitants [26]. The municipality predominantly cultivates essential food crops such as cocoyam, maize, beans, plantains, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and coffee, which serve as the primary cash crop. To address food insecurity and bolster agricultural sustainability, the council regularly organizes agricultural pastoral shows, conducts seminars, and workshops, and aids farmers [27].

The Kumbo Council, in collaboration with the divisional delegation of agriculture and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Self Reliance Promoters and Green Care, orchestrated seminars and workshops aimed at enhancing farmers' knowledge of modern agricultural techniques. These initiatives targeted groups of farmers engaged in cultivating staple food crops like potatoes, beans, and maize in the municipality. For instance, in 2006, the council partnered with the divisional delegation of agriculture to organize a workshop for farmers, followed by additional workshops in 2008 and 2012. These workshops provided farmers with insights into cultivation practices and strategies for marketing their produce [28]. According to Loveline Chin, her participation in seminars and workshops improved her

²⁶ Interview with, Ibrahim Dzelayuv Yufenyuy, 50 years old, Fourth Deputy Mayor, 8th August 2016.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Interview with, Ibrahim Dzelayuv Yufenyuy, 50 years old, Fourth deputy mayor, Kumbo, 8th August 2016.

agricultural know-how. This is because she learned modern ways of cultivating maize, beans, and Irish potatoes like monoculture which improved her yields and standard of living [29].

In addition to conducting seminars for farmers, the Council arranged a workshop in 2004 specifically tailored for women engaged in small-scale businesses. Approximately 30 female entrepreneurs participated in this workshop, where they received training in business management skills [30]. The council ensured regular follow-up to assess the impact of the training on their business turnover and growth. To address any challenges faced by these women, a committee was established in 2005 to provide advice on overcoming difficulties. Furthermore, in 2010, another group of women received training on transforming agricultural products, including Irish and sweet potatoes [31]. Approximately 40 female entrepreneurs participated in a week-long training program aimed at enhancing their business management skills. Known as "The Women Entrepreneur Program (WEP)," this initiative was sponsored by the Gender Fund of the Canadian High Commission in partnership with the Kumbo Council. Participants were instructed on utilizing various products to create flour, biscuits, vaseline, soap, and powder soap. The training equipped them with the knowledge needed to start and enhance their businesses. As a result, some participants began producing soap and soap powder for local consumption and commercial purposes. Patricia Wirnkar, for example, utilized the training to start producing soap, subsequently improving her financial status, and enabling her to provide for herself and her children [32].

To encourage women's involvement in agriculture and business, the Kumbo Council in line with its mandate created the Kumbo Business Women Savings and Credit Cooperative (KUBWOSCCO) in 2004 [33]. Since its establishment, this cooperative has had a positive impact on women. It has provided women with fertilizers at a discounted rate, offering a 10% reduction in the price of each bag of fertilizer. Additionally, the cooperative extends short-term loans to women, featuring lower interest rates for both business and agricultural ventures. Notably, the activities of the cooperative garnered recognition and support from the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2005. The ILO in 2006 created a link between the cooperative and the Food and Agricultural Organization for fertilizer

supply [34]. These activities or efforts of the council, in collaboration with the ILO promoted business as well as agricultural productivity amongst the women of the municipality [35]. This is because, through sensitization, short-term loans, and inputs like fertilizers, women were encouraged to engage in business and agriculture.

Infrastructural Development

The need for infrastructural provision within the Kumbo Municipality was imperative in ensuring sustainable economic development and the transformation of lives. It is for this reason that the Council, since its creation in 1977 has been involved in the construction and rehabilitation of roads, markets, public toilets, bridges, and slaughterhouses [36].

Roads

The provision and maintenance of roads within the Kumbo Municipality are important in ensuring sustainable economic development and the transformation of lives. This is because, without roads, it is difficult for people to circulate, thereby hindering the free flow of economic activities, especially the transportation of farm produce from the various villages to the markets for sale [37]. It is for this reason that the council since its creation has taken road construction and rehabilitation as one of its major priorities. In 1996, the council adopted a participatory approach to ensuring that roads were rehabilitated. Both the administration, the church, traditional authorities, and the entire population were involved. There was general sensitization which was aimed at gathering financial, material, and human contributions towards the rehabilitation of roads. Since 1996, the council rehabilitated roads twice a year. That is from May – June and from October–November. In 2008, the council purchased heavy road equipment graders, scrapers, bulldozers, and caterpillars to improve the accessibility and movement of goods and services within the municipality. In 2011, the council rehabilitated a 29km road thereby ensuring accessibility between Nkuv village and Kumbo. The road linking Meluf and Tobin's new market was rehabilitated. Roads linking Shuv and Meluf were constructed, thereby ensuring the movement of people and factors of production in this area [38].

To ensure the constant maintenance and sustainability of roads, the Kumbo Council created 16 local road maintenance committees within the

²⁹ Interview with, Loveline Chin, 45years old, Farmer, Kumbo, 9th September 2017.

³⁰ Interview with, Charles Nkongnso, 45 years old, Council Development Officer, Kumbo, 10th August 2016.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Interview with, Patricia Wirnkar, 48years old, Business Woman, Kumbo, 8th September 2017.

³³ Interview with, Charles Nkongnso, 45 years old, Council Development Officer, Kumbo, 10th August 2016.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ Interview with, Margarett Nkong, 43 Years Old, First Deputy Mayor, Kumbo, 8th August 2016

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ *Ibid*

Municipality. In 2010, the Council handed over to the committee light road equipment like wheelbarrows, dig axes, cutlasses, forks, hammers, spades, buckets, hoes, and rackets. This equipment was used in maintaining roads within the municipality. Some villages that benefited from these light equipment projects included Mbah, Mbuluf, Bamgham, Meluf, Shukai, Taakui, and Kingomen amongst others.

The Kumbo Council is equally involved in providing other infrastructures such as slaughterhouses, culverts, public toilets, and drainage structures constructed in three different villages. These villages were squares in Kumbo town, Takum, and Tobin. Culverts were constructed in almost all the council areas in the municipality such as in Tonee, Veekakui, Taabah, Mbveh, Njavnyuy, Mbah, Nkuv, Faah, Mbve, Bamzeng, and Kikaikom. Slaughterhouses were constructed in Kumbo to provide a specific place where cows could be slaughtered. These slaughterhouses are closer to the main market to ease transportation [39].

Markets

One of the prime objectives of the Kumbo Council in her strategic plan for sustainable economic development and the transformation of lives is the construction and rehabilitation of markets [40]. The

construction and rehabilitation of markets were intended to reduce poverty and increase the magnitude of life-transforming economic activities amongst the inhabitants of Kumbo. Since its creation, the council constructed both temporal and permanent market structures. In 2003, the Tobin ultra-modern market was constructed. The market comprises 144 sheds, a large section for livestock, and a motor park. This project was conceived to fight poverty, as businessmen and women were encouraged to take up sheds in the market for business purposes. In 2005, the Council constructed the Kumbo-squares food and vegetable market. The market was meant to assist women who constituted about 95% of the food sellers in the market. Before the construction of this market, the women sold their products under unpleasant conditions, especially during rainy seasons [41]. Close to 500 people usually attend the market every week. Other markets constructed by the council include the Jim-Meluf cattle market, the Mbah food market, the Mbuluf food market, Kikaikom, the Bamkikai temporal market, and the Njavnyuy market amongst others. To ensure the sustainability of markets, committees, as well as cleaners, are put in place by the council to ensure that these structures are properly managed [42]. Table 1 shows the number of markets and market sheds constructed by the Council within the Municipality between 1977 and 2013.

Table 1: Construction of Markets by Kumbo Council, 1977 – 2013

S/N	Villages	Year 1977-2003	Year 2004-13	Number of Markets	Market Sheds	Temporal Sheds
1	Tobin-Kumbo	NA	2004	1	144	NA
2	Kumbo-Squares	NA	2005	1	32	NA
3	Jim-Meluf	NA	2005	1	NA	NA
4	Mbah	NA	2007	1	20	NA
5	Mbuluf	NA	2008	1	30	NA
6	Kikaikam	NA	2010	1	NA	NA
7	Bamkikai	NA	2010	1	NA	83
8	Njavnyuy	NA	2011	1	15	NA
9	Kitiwum	NA	2011	1	NA	NA
10	Taidu	NA	2012	1	NA	NA
11	Kishiy	NA	2012	1	NA	NA
12	Kingomen	NA	2012	1	NA	NA
Total	12	NA		12	241	83

Source: Author's Fieldwork Compilation, August 2016

Note: NA is not available.

Table 1 presents data on the total number of markets and market sheds constructed by the Council in

Kumbo Municipality. From 2004 to 2012, the Council constructed a total of 12 markets, comprising 241 sheds.

³⁹Interview with, Njibring Jaff Shinyuy, 48 years old, Third Deputy Mayor, Kumbo 8th August 2016.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Interview with, Njibring Jaff Shinyuy, 48 years old, Third Deputy Mayor, Kumbo 8th August 2016.

⁴² *Ibid.*

These market constructions were mutually beneficial for both the council and the municipality's inhabitants, as they served as a significant revenue source for the former. Most of the constructed and rehabilitated sheds were rented out to traders. In 2013, the council generated a total revenue of 2,386,500 FCFA from Tobin, Bamkikia, and Kumbo-Squares markets. Additionally,

the markets played a crucial role for the populace by facilitating the sale and purchase of goods without inconvenience. Their presence in the villages eliminated the need for people to travel long distances to sell their goods. Figure 1 illustrates the trends in market construction in Kumbo Municipality.

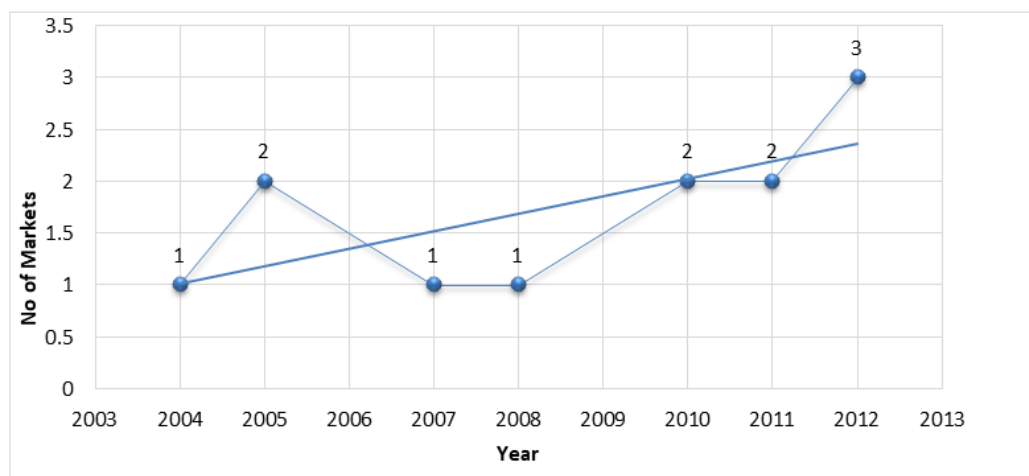


Figure 1: Construction of Markets by the Kumbo Council, 2004 -2013
Source: Data Collected from Kumbo Council, August 2016

Figure 5 shows an upward trend in the construction of markets from 2004-2005. Between 2007-2008, the council constructed one market each. Two markets were constructed in 2010 and 2011 respectively and three in 2012 thereby experiencing an upward trend in the construction of markets within the municipality.

Bridges

Another important sector of interest in infrastructural development by the Kumbo Council was the construction and maintenance of bridges. The construction and maintenance of bridges were aimed at linking intra-village and inter-village transportation to facilitate the free circulation of factors of production from one destination to another thereby promoting sustainable development [43]. Between 1977 and 1990, provisional wooden bridges were constructed at Shuv, Meluf, Bamkikai, Kai, Njavnyuy, and Melim. In 2000, the council constructed a bridge at Nkuv costing 1,416,000FCFA. This went a long way to ease the transportation of farm products from the area to the various markets. Another bridge constructed by the council was at Takum in 2005, which eased the movements of inhabitants around the area especially pupils and students who had to cross the river to attend school. The bridge at the entrance to the Tobin market and the slaughterhouse still at Tobin equally facilitated the movement of vehicles in and out of Kumbo as well

as the transportation of cows into the slaughterhouse. Other bridges constructed were those at Kishiy on the Kissan River costing 2.856.000FCFA. Before then, crossing the river was horrendous to the inhabitants of the locality [44]. This bridge facilitated the movement of people as well as the transportation of farm produce from Nkuv to the markets. This improved the socio-economic lives of the people of Nkuv.

Education

Education is one of the prime objectives of the Kumbo Council. This is because of its impact on the socio-cultural development of the municipality [45]. Without education, it is difficult for a society to achieve its development goals. Most schools in the municipality especially in villages suffered from insufficient infrastructure. The tendency was that private homes were rented for studies with unfavorable and uncondusive environments for learning. Some of the existing and rented structures were poorly constructed. Such schools found in the various villages within the municipality often got financial and material assistance from the council either by constructing classrooms or renovating the existing ones. Between 2004 and 2013, the council constructed two classrooms at Government School (G.S) Melim, two classrooms at G.S Tadu, two classrooms at G.S Kitiwum, two classrooms at Government Practicing School Mbveh and G.S Shisong, a nursing School block

⁴³ Interview with, Charles Nkongso, 45 years old, Council Development Officer, Kumbo, 10th August 2016.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Interview with, Charles Bimela, 35 years old, Teacher, Kumbo, 22nd July 2016

at G.N.S Kumbo, two classrooms at G.S Tobin amongst others [46]. Table 2 shows the total number of classrooms constructed by the council.

Table 2: Classrooms Constructed by the Kumbo Council, 1977 - 2013

SN	Villages	Classrooms – 1977 – 2013				
		Year 1977-2003	Year 2004-2013	N° of Classrooms	Total No of Classrooms in a Year	Supply of equipment to Schools
1	G.S Shisong	NA	2004	02	4	G.S Melim
2	G.S Melim	NA	2004	02		G.S Bamngam
3	G.S Tadu	NA	2005	02	2	G.S Kishey
4	G.S Kitiwum	NA	2006	02	4	G.S Kikaikom
5	G.M.S Mbveh	NA	2006	02		G.S Jerfon
6	G.S Kumbo	NA	2007	02	2	G.S Nkuv
7	G.S Kiyān	NA	2008	02	6	G.S Kongir
8	G.S Mbah	NA	2008	02		G.S. Jem-Vekakui
9	G.S Tobin	NA	2008	02		G.S Kumbo
10	G.S Mbuluf	NA	2009	02	4	G.S Tadu
11	G.S Yeh	NA	2009	02		G.S. Mbah
12	G.S Bumdzeng	NA	2010	02	2	G.S Mbotong
13	G.S Bambui	NA	2011	02	2	G.S Toy
14	G.S Bamkikai	NA	2012	02	4	G.S Kitiwum
15	G.S Bamkou	NA	2012	02		G.S Bamzeng
Total	15	NA		30	30	15

Source: Researcher's compilation from Research Findings, August 2016

Note: NA is Not Available

Table 2 offers a comprehensive breakdown of classrooms constructed by the Kumbo Council between 1977 and 2013, divided into two distinct periods: 1977-2003 and 2004-2013. While specific yearly construction figures are unavailable for the initial period, a total of 30 classrooms were erected by the council from 2004 to 2013. Additionally, the table records equipment provision to schools, with 15 institutions benefitting

during this timeframe. The table delineates 15 villages where classrooms were built, each associated with a particular year and the corresponding number of constructed classrooms. Notably, the strategic allocation of classrooms across different villages underscores the council's commitment to addressing educational needs municipally. Figure 2 shows the trend in the construction of classrooms in Kumbo Municipality.

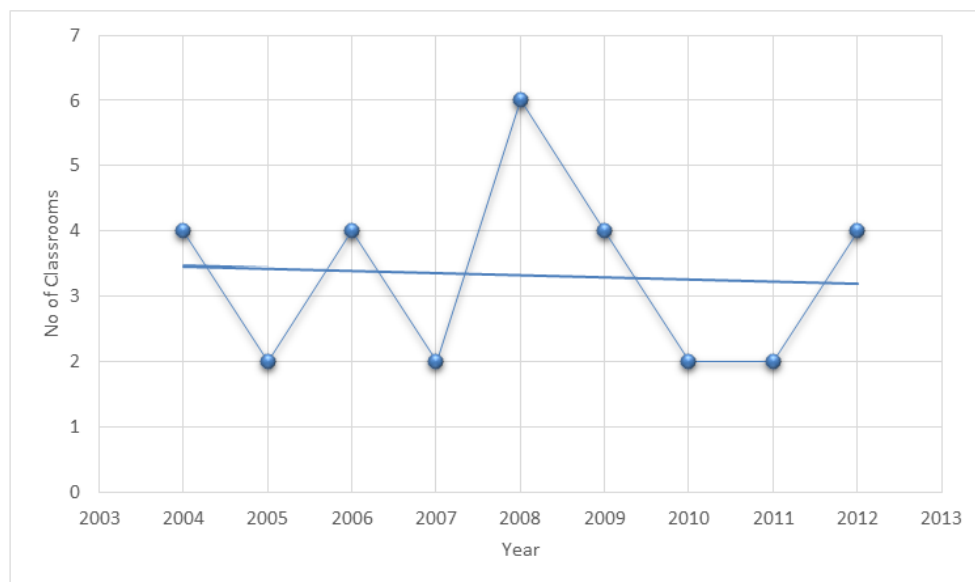


Figure 2: Construction of Classrooms by the Kumbo Council, 2004 - 2013

Source: Data Collected from Kumbo Council, August 2016

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

Figure 2 illustrates the fluctuating trend in classroom construction by the Kumbo Council over the period analyzed. The number of classrooms built varied, starting at 4 in 2004, then decreasing to 2 in 2005, before rising again to 4 in 2006. Subsequently, 2 classrooms were constructed in 2007, followed by a significant surge to 6 classrooms in 2008. However, this figure declined to 4 in 2009, and further dropped to 2 in both 2010 and 2011. In 2012, there was a slight uptick to 4 classrooms. These fluctuations can be attributed to the council's engagement in various projects within the municipality, indicating a prioritization of resources and efforts based on prevailing needs and circumstances.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study on local governance and transformative initiatives in Kumbo Municipality, Cameroon, spanning from 1977 to 2013, highlights a nuanced scenario. Despite the commendable efforts of local governments in initiating life-altering projects, their overall impact remains constrained. The sluggish pace of progress, coupled with challenges in project conception, execution, and maintenance, significantly limits the efficacy of these endeavours. Moreover, the decentralization process in Cameroon, as envisioned in the 1996 constitution, fails to substantially empower local government institutions, thereby restricting their decision-making capabilities.

Urgent reforms are imperative to catalyze tangible positive change. These reforms should be aligned with the autonomy principles outlined in the constitution, empowering local governments to effectively address the pressing needs of their communities. Only through such holistic reforms can local governance evolve into a potent instrument for transformative development in Kumbo Municipality, serving as a beacon for progress and prosperity in the wider region.

This study underscores the pivotal role of local governance in fostering development. By bridging the gap between administration and the populace, local governments can discern and tackle the priority needs of their communities, thereby fostering democracy, accountability, and efficient resource management. Empowering local governments transcends mere policy; it represents a fundamental stride towards sustainable

development and enhanced livelihoods in Kumbo Municipality and beyond.

REFERENCES

- Riccardo, A. (2011). *Reconciling Top-down and Bottom-up Development Policies*. London: LSE Research Publishers.
- Ngalim, A. N. (2014). "Local Government, Infrastructure Provision and Sustainable Development in Fako Municipalities of Cameroon South West Region." *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 16(5).
- Yufenyuy, I. D. 50 Years old, Fourth Deputy Mayor, interviewed at Kumbo, 21st Nov 2017.
- Finn, J. G. (2008). *Building Local Government and Regions: An Action Plan for the Future of Local Governance*. London: George Allen.
- Gemandze, B. J. (2009). *Issues in Local Government Theories, Principles, and Practice*. Buea: Trinity Ventures.
- Cameroon. (1974). Law No 74/23 of December 1974 to Organize Councils.
- Gemandze, J. (1994). *The Failure of Decentralization Policy in Cameroon: An Analysis of the 1974 Law on Local Government Reforms*. Buea: Trinity Ventures.
- Cameroon. (2004). Law No 2004/018 of July 22, 2004, on the Orientation of Decentralization.
- Interview with, Wirnkar Boniface, 65 years old, Former Mayor, Kumbo, 17th Dec 2016.
- Fon, E. 40 Years Old, Finance Officer, Interviewed at Kumbo, 21st Nov. 2017.
- Yufenyuy, I. D. 50 Years old, Fourth Deputy Mayor, interviewed at Kumbo, 21st Nov 2017.
- Chin, L. 45 Years Old, Farmer, Interviewed at Kumbo, 9th September 2017.
- Nkongnso, C. 45 Years Old, Council Development Officer, Interviewed at Kumbo, 10th August 2016.
- Wirnkar, P. 48 Years Old, Business Woman, Interviewed at Kumbo, 8th September 2017.
- Nkongnso, C. 45 Years Old, Council Development Officer, Interviewed at Kumbo, 10th August 2016.
- Nkong M. 43 Years Old, First Deputy Mayor, Interviewed at Kumbo, 8th August 2016.
- Bimela, C. 35 Years Old, Teacher, Interviewed at Kumbo, 22nd July 2016.