Women’s Actions To Counter Hate Speech (WATCH SPEECH)

We are looking for an organization to establish a partnership for the implementation of this project in Cameroon.

**Project Title:** Women’s Actions To Counter Hate Speech (WATCH SPEECH)

**Who we are:** The Cameroonian Committee for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights is a women’s organization born out of the desire to support the active and equal participation of women and men in development. The realization of all women's rights is central to its mission. The approach chosen by the organization is gender sensitive, intersectional and focused on human rights. In its interventions, the Comity considers the overlapping of oppressions linked to disability, race, ethnicity, age, disability, economic status and gender identity. The Committee works to translate women’s human rights standards into results. The organization focuses on empowering the rights-holders (poorest and most marginalized) by developing their capacity to know, exercise, claim, and seek redress for their rights. Because rights imply duties, the Committee advocates duty-bearers (governments) to respect, protect and fulfill their legal human rights obligations. The organization also develops partnership and alliances with civil society organizations who have a moral, ethical or social responsibility to promote and observe human rights. The Cameroonian Committee for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights field of action are Women’s human rights, Gender justice and the struggle against gender-based violence, Promotion of reproductive health rights, Women’s political participation, Environmental justice, Women, and culture of peace.

**Project summary**

**Project location:** the women's actions to counter hate speech (watch speech) project will be implemented in schools in underprivileged areas, in urban and semi-urban areas of Cameroon.

**Project’s target audience**

The primary target audience:
- **Young women and men aged 15-34 years** attending partner schools and universities to strengthen their capacity to counter hate speech and act in favour of peace and security, alternatives to violence in resolving conflict, tolerance, improving mutual understanding between ethnic groups.
- **Young women and men aged 15-34 years** Facebook users and other social networks users.
- **National security forces and legal professionals** for the development of their capacity to demonstrate zero tolerance towards hate speech.

The secondary target audience:

- **Cameroon’s national soccer team**, Indomitable Lions, is the subject of national pride. The former and current players are models for youth.
- **Media professionals, teachers and partner artists**

1) **WHAT PROBLEM IS THE PROJECT ADDRESSING**

The Women's Actions To Counter Hate Speech (WATCH SPEECH) project deals with the dissemination of hate speech in Cameroon. It offers an approach to fight hate speech online and in person, through media and information education, and the strengthening of intercultural skills of young beneficiaries.
Cameroon is an ethnically diverse country with about 250 groups. Cameroon’s ethnic community has been known to coexist in peace, and no particular group had political influence over the affairs of the country. These groups contribute to the cultural diversity of the country.

But insecurity is increasing in the country, due to terrorism and the resurgence of separatist impulses in the two anglophone northwest and southwest regions. This situation contributes to increasing the tension between the main ethnic groups and between francophones and anglophones. Following Paul Biya’s election in 2018, Cameroon’s political situation has deteriorated dramatically.

Public hatred and socio-ethnic stigma are taking on alarming proportions. The phenomenon has taken on such alarming proportions that the government decided to present a bill to the National Assembly to punish contempt of the tribes and incitement to tribal hatred. The bishops of Cameroon sent a pastoral letter on December 9, 2019 to Christians and to all men of good will on fraternity. The letter notes the escalation of violence in all its forms and of the “growing and highly worrying deterioration of the social climate”.

A tremendous number of intolerant and hateful messages are now exchanged by young Cameroonians on social networks. Hate speech in Cameroon unites and divides at the same time. It creates “us” and “them”. Indeed, while statistics offering a global overview of the phenomenon are not available, both civil society organizations and officials have recognized that hateful messages disseminated online by Cameroonians against Cameroonians are increasingly common and have elicited unprecedented attention to develop adequate responses.

The scope of hate speech in Cameroon takes on its full meaning with regard to the statistics on the use of social networks in the country. Official statistics indicate that over 6 million Cameroonians are Internet users. More than 50% are active on social networks (3.6 million). The group of greatest interest includes the 3.4 million who are active on mobile devices. 3.5 million Cameroonians are connected to Facebook, 58.8% are men, compared to 41.2% women. Meanwhile the WhatsApp application has become essential in the daily life of Cameroonians; 30%, of users open the application at least 50 times a day.

Considering all these elements, the Cameroonian Committee for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights has chosen to act to counter hate speech in Cameroon. This will be done by promoting peace and security, alternatives to violence to resolve conflicts, tolerance, and mutual understanding between ethnic groups.

2) WHAT GOALS WILL BE ACHIEVED THE PROJECT?

a) Strengthen young people’s (14–35 years) intercultural competences to enable them to counter hate speech through the dissemination of messages in favor of peace and security, alternatives to violence in resolving conflict, tolerance, and mutual understanding between ethnic groups.

b) Strengthen young people’s (14–35 years) critical skills to counteract hate speech online to allow them to recognize and develop zero tolerance for hate speech.

c) Build national security forces’ commitment to zero tolerance for hate speech in person and online.

d) Strengthen the capacity of opinion leaders involved in the project to support young beneficiaries in actions against hate speech, in favor of peace and security, alternatives to violence in resolving conflict, tolerance, and mutual understanding between ethnic groups.

3) HOW THIS WILL HAPPEN?

Initiatives to counter online hate speech have been undertaken in Cameroon by civil society, the government, and leaders of faith-based organizations. While the previous initiatives have addressed mostly reactive responses to the proliferation of hate speech in Cameroon, the WATCH SPEECH project will provide more structural answers to hate speech through education. The project will counter online and in person hate speech through media and information literacy, as well as building intercultural competences. Project activities will be carried out using three strategies:
a) **Information**: Raising awareness about hate speech and its consequences, conveying and disseminating information, and communicating the relevant legal framework.

b) **Analysis**: Identifying and assessing hate speech, analyzing common causes and underlying assumptions and prejudices, recognizing biased behaviors, reporting and exposing hate speech.

c) **Action**: responding to hate speech; writing against hate speech, changing the discourse of hate speech.

If you are interested and able to participate in the project, please contact Marie Pascaline Menono.  
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