

## International Relations and the impact of Technology on Gender Dynamics and Peace building in Buea and Bali in the South West and North West regions of Cameroon respectively

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**ABSTRACT:** A study in Bali and Buea in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon respectively explored the intersection of International Relations, Gender dynamics, Technology and Peace-building. Gender equality and security have been exacerbated by rapid advancement in technology. Despite the increasing interconnectedness and potential for progress that technology offers, women continue to face systemic barriers in accessing opportunities and participating in decision-making processes. This research sought to address challenges faced by women in participating in International Relations in the face of technology. The ultimate goal was to contribute to the development of policies and practices that integrate gender perspectives and leverage technology to foster sustainable peace and security worldwide. A mixed method approach was used for the study while questionnaires, interviews and document analysis data collection tools were applied. Data analysis was descriptive, inferential, and thematic where appropriate while SPSS 27.0 was used for quantitative data. Results revealed that women still suffer from gender discrimination, low political representation, and stereotype. Also, that technological advancement can have a positive impact in promoting gender equality globally. Additionally, significant disparities in access to and use of technological tools in peace and security contexts by women was greatly observed. Thus, the need for education and training of women. It was concluded that technology can act as a powerful weapon to peace and security efforts if access to education especially for women is enhanced. Therefore, there is need for more inclusion of female-led Civil Society Organizations on decision making tables at all levels, women's safety in the fight against violence should be of great concern, alternative defense mechanisms should be employed in rural areas and technology should be extended to the suburbs. One thing to admit is that women are still far from being included in decision making though their inclusion in peace building processes.

**Key words:** International relations, gender dynamics, technology, peace-building and conflict.

### I. Introduction

International relations (IR) is a branch of political science that deals with the interactions between sovereign states, non-state actors, and international organizations such as the United Nations in the global system. In it, the concept of gender has become an essential aspect of understanding power and policy-making. Gender refers to the social roles, expectations, and norms that are associated with being a man or woman in a given society. Gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping international relations, specifically in the context of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Recent trends in international relations include the rise of multipolarity, increased strategic competition between major powers, the impact of globalization, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the emergence of new forms of conflict like cyber warfare. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on transnational and global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and economic instability. Some key trends are the following:

Shifting Power Dynamics whereby the international system is moving away from a unipolar or bipolar structure towards a multipolar world with multiple centers of power, including China, Russia, and the European Union, major powers are increasingly engaged in competition for economic, technological, and military dominance, with the US-China rivalry being a prominent example.

According to international analysts, BRICS (Brasil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) can be "prototypes of a multipolar world order", because the institutions of these associations are built on the basis of the United Nations Charter and international laws.

NATO's (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization) strategy to 2030 stipulates that the bloc is facing many challenges, especially Russia's strengthened military power and the rise of China, which is significantly changing the balance of power in the world, leading to a race for economic and technological superiority.

To adapt to the new political and security environment, NATO determines the alliance's operational directions to strengthen and maintain military power, towards a politically unified organization, applying a global approach, identifying Russia as a direct threat, and China as a systemic threat, admitting new members in Europe and expanding its influence into Asia. Accordingly, the US, UK and Australia officially established a trilateral security partnership (AUKUS) to act as the nucleus of "Asian NATO". In addition to AUKUS, the US recommended Japan and South Korea to establish a trilateral alliance at the Summit on 18 August 2023.

Consequently, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 was a landmark moment in recognizing the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and the importance of women's participation in peace and security efforts. It is important to recognize that intersectional approach on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and more to women, peace and security acknowledges the diverse experiences of women in different contexts.

As far as gendered impact of conflict is concerned, women and men often experience conflict differently. Women on the one hand frequently face unique challenges such as; sexual violence, displacement, and loss of livelihoods during and after conflict. Understanding these gendered impacts is crucial for effective peace building and post conflicts reconstruction.

However, while gender studies have been popular for some time, it was not until the 1980s, that PACS first began to acknowledge and study the different experiences males and females have during war and peace. Since, there have been books about women and war, women working at the grassroots to build peace, women and transitional justice, women and peace education, and a different view of human security, all much needed contributions to the discourse that should influence our changing world. Still, we know this work must go far beyond acknowledgment of heterosexual men and women and their differing involvements and needs.

According to the study of Maureen P. Flaher\_2015 on PACS, peace and security, in the twenty-first century has brought with it a shift from the notion that human security is located in secure national borders to a focus on the need to facilitate and protect the safety and development, the freedom and dignity of all. This has led to the theories underpinning humanitarian intervention in conflicts around the world.

There again, digital technologies have important potentials in creating mitigation measures for risks of this type. For example, AI-powered tools can provide threat detection, enabling digital fingerprinting and tracing sources of harassment. Also, blockchain platforms, offer secure communication and document processing with the minimum risk of malicious interference. Lastly, metaverse, VR and AR could be used to simulate real-life cyberattack scenarios, helping mediators learn how to respond effectively. In combination with efforts meant to create solutions for efficient governing, measures of this type can significantly reduce cyber risks and empower women mediators to operate more confidently and securely in their peacebuilding efforts.

Lisa Schirch (2019): In "The Role of Technology in Peacebuilding: Challenges and Opportunities", Schirch addressed how technology can be used for conflict resolution, emphasizing that digital tools could enhance women's involvement in peacebuilding processes. She noted that women have used mobile technology to organize protests, share information, and document human rights abuses in conflict zones, but she also pointed to challenges such as surveillance and the manipulation of digital spaces to silence women's voices.

Still on Gender and Technology in Conflict Contexts Denise R. E. Bossie (2020): In her article "Digital Technologies in Conflict Zones: *The Gendered Impact of Mobile Connectivity on Women's Role in Peacebuilding*", Bossie discusses how mobile technologies have changed the dynamics of women's involvement in peacebuilding efforts. While these technologies have allowed women to communicate and organize in new ways, Bossie points out that women's use of technology is often constrained by patriarchal structures and limited access to resources.

Additionally, the *Samoa Gender Monograph* (SGM) 2020 presented those males and female different roles, needs and interests based on socially ascribed norms, which inform on gendered attitudes and behaviors. These can be measured in a variety of ways including an analysis of census data. In order to achieve gender equality, it is critical that both understand these gendered social norms and to develop laws and policies that address the power imbalances that sustain and enforce disparities and inequalities as stipulated by the Sustainable Development Goal 5: Therefore, advocating for gender equality should involve both genders for there to be long lasting solutions.

Cameroon's journey towards integrating women into peace and security frameworks is marked by significant achievements, yet challenges persist. The alignment of international, regional, and national commitments has laid a solid foundation, while the IOM's contributions have been critical in empowering women and amplifying their roles in peace processes. As these efforts continue to unfold, it is essential that all stakeholders remain committed to ensuring that women's voices are not only heard but actively shape the future of peace and security in Cameroon. Concerning the DDR challenge in Cameroon, it hosts three centers that

work on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of members of armed forces and groups. Currently, these centres house nearly 3,000 fighters formerly associated with Boko Haram.

The inclusion of local actors particularly women-led organizations in the operations of the centres is increasingly recognized as essential to these efforts. These organizations bring vital perspectives to DDR processes, addressing the distinct needs of women and girls impacted by conflict whilst fostering community healing and resilience.

However, these organizations faced significant barriers, including limited access to resources, capacity constraints, and cultural norms that often marginalize women in leadership roles. To address these challenges, NORCAP has implemented a programme to strengthen women-led organizations and ensure their meaningful participation in both DDR programmes and wider humanitarian response initiative.

Also, the Southwest/Northwest Women's Task Force, Cameroon Sally Mboumien, North West Coordinator thinks that without incorporating men in women's effort to maintaining peace, their efforts will be futile. Most recently, the Task Force has called for the full participation of women, grass-roots advocates, and persons with disabilities in the National Dialogue, which is seeking to address competing visions of federalism, independence or other approaches to addressing the country's Francophone/Anglophone divide. These two states have been devastated by violence and political unrest.

## II. Problem description

The concept of gender dynamics in International Relations is a critical component that addresses how gender shapes and is shaped by global politics. It encompasses various dimensions, including the roles, experiences, and impacts of gender in international affairs. Advancement in technology is reshaping the landscape of international relations, highlighting the critical role of gender perspectives in the Women, Peace and Security agenda by amplifying women's voices, addressing security challenges, and promoting inclusive policy-making to ensure sustainable peace. Women not being included in peace talk has been a great concern and how they can use technology especially in the rural areas has also been a glaring gap in literature that this research seeks to research on.

## III. Research objectives

### General

- To analyze the impact of technology on gender dynamics and peacebuilding in international relations.

### Specific

- To examine how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital communication platforms, affect women's participation in diplomacy and conflict resolution.
- To analyze the effectiveness of digital platforms in amplifying women's voices in peace building processes and diplomacy.

## IV. Materials and Methods

A mixed method data collection approach was used to enhance the validity and reliability of research findings.

1) **Questionnaires:** Structured surveys or questionnaire was administered to 383 individuals in various categories through a convenience sampling to gather quantitative data on various aspects of international relations, gender, technology and peace building. Questionnaires were administered to practitioners, policy makers, researchers, activists, and people working in the field of technology and international relations. Among the 365 respondents, 59.7% (218) were female and 40.3% (147) were male. Age wise, persons within the age group of 51-60 years dominated 37.8% (138), followed by those 41-50 years 31.0% (113), 31-40 years 22.2% (81) and lastly 20-30 years 9.0% (33).

2) **Interviews;** Interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders such as government officials, diplomats, activists or NGO heads, and some conflict survivors (Internally displaced Persons). These interviews were either semi-structured or unstructured. This approach was to help better explore the role of technology in shaping their participation and influence within international relations, gender, peace and security arena.

3) **Document analysis:** Review of policy documents, international agreements, official reports, and academic literature to collect data on international relations and the impact of technology on gender dynamics and peacebuilding which revealed existing frameworks, policies, and discourses. This shed light on the institutional context, policy discussions, and obstacles facing gender equality in the field.

Areas in my case study where data were collected were Bali and Buea municipalities in the North and South west regions of Cameroon respectively.

### Ethical considerations

During the encounter with every participant, the purpose of the study was explained and participation was voluntary. For respondents working in organizations, an authorization was sort from hierarchy to allow access to the employees of interest.

## V. Methods of Data analysis

### Quantitative Data

After data were thoroughly checked for possible errors, quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used were frequency count and percentages while the inferential statistical tools used were Chi-Square test and Pearson test of correlation to verify the different hypotheses based on their nature. All findings were represented at 95% confidence interval with an error margin of 5%.

### Qualitative Data

On the other hand, the qualitative data derived from semi-structured and unstructured interview guide were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes, groundings/frequency and quotations.

### Theoretical background

Feminist theory has come a long way, and each era's contributions has shaped its evolution. Although dated, the earlier feminist ideas and movements laid the foundation for more recent feminist theories and empowered women to demand equal rights and opportunities. In addition to the feminist theory, there also exist several theories and perspectives on how technology influences peace and security.

Technological Determinism theory by Karp, A.C., & Zamiska, N.W. (2025). This theory holds the premise that technology shapes society, including peace and conflict dynamics. By this theory on Security, innovations like nuclear weapons or surveillance tools fundamentally alter how wars are fought or deterred. Looking at it from a peace angle, some technologies, like communication platforms or early warning systems, can prevent conflict by promoting transparency and coordination.

## VI. Discussions

To begin with the first question, on the believe that technological advancement has a positive impact on promoting gender equality in international relations, cumulatively, majority of respondents 78.3% (288) accepted that technological advancement has a positive impact on promoting gender equality in international relation while just 9.6% (35) denied and 12.0% (44) neutral. In support to the majority of respondents, one of the interviewees said “.....*I think technological advancement has been useful to both men and women. In the recent past as I observed, the female*

*gender is beginning to have more confidence in themselves and so, the observed differences in the way that technological advancement would impact them, the differences are narrowing up. There are even areas that I see that women are moving ahead.....”*

Also, thanks to technology, roles are gradually being changed as more women are sensitized and even trained to take up the so called `Male dominated roles. More still, there is equality in access to up-to-date information, policy formation to a minimal extent and increased awareness on gender rights through activism and advocacy. In addition to that there has been increased access to economic empowerment thus reducing inequality gap. However, the goal is for a complete close of this gap or reduction to a reasonable level. This therefore ties with the critical theory of Booth K. (2007) which states that security studies should address power structures and emancipatory goals. Empowering women through technology therefore confirms this theory as appropriate for this study since it emphasizes emancipation.

On research question 2, with reference to the impact of crisis intervention tools, majority of respondents 71.5% (261) agreed that crisis intervention tools identify potential crisis while slightly above average 52.3% (191) agreed that crisis tools prevent attackers from manifesting harm on inhabitants and just 36.7% (1340) of them agreed that crisis tools help in quick intervention during attacks.

Furthermore, based on how technology has helped in crisis situation, on individual note, 95.6% (349) said it has helped in identifying and reporting suspects, followed by 87.7% (320) that also said it has helped them to prevent an attack, and 84.7% (309) mentioned rescuing victims of violence. There were other positive benefits although not mentioned. With reference to the impact of crisis intervention tools, majority of respondents 71.5% (261) agreed that crisis intervention tools identify potential crisis while slightly above average 52.3% (191) agreed that crisis tools prevent attackers from manifesting harm on inhabitants and just 36.7% (1340) of them agreed that crisis tools help in quick intervention during attack. Thus, technologies have been helpful in magnifying women`s voices in peace processes. Most respondents think artificial intelligence and data analytics take the prime position as the most significant technology that has magnified women`s voices as far as maintaining peace is concerned.

As far as local reality is concerned, most rural areas experiencing crisis lack in technological facilities that can foster peacebuilding through artificial intelligence. Others indicated that online education and training platforms have also been helpful in making women`s voices heard globally. However, the percentage of women who can use these platforms for education and training is still limited. Thus, women need to move on with the time by

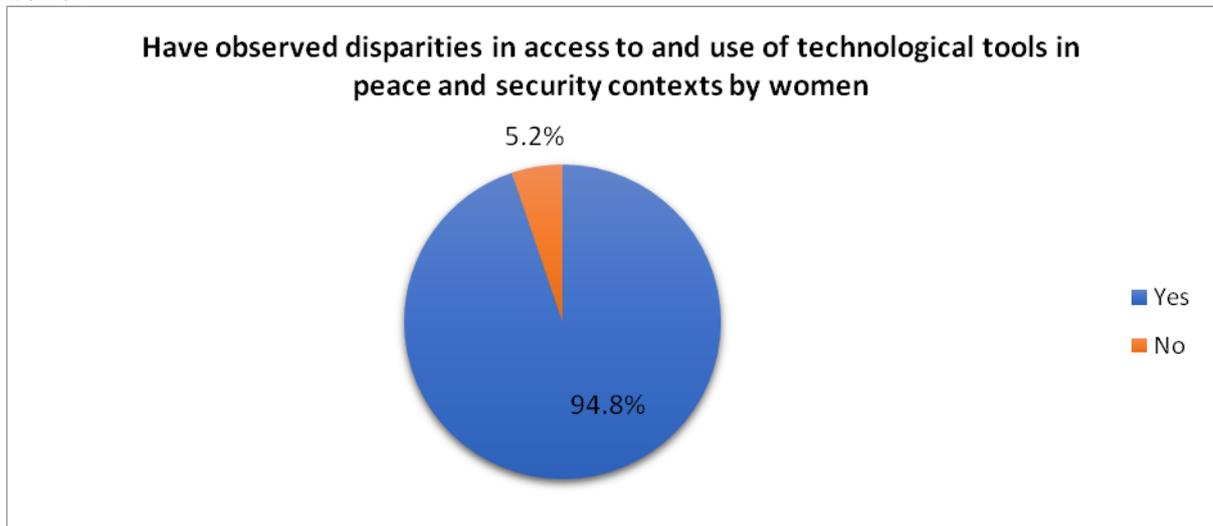
making use of digital opportunities to develop themselves so as to make their voices heard and personal progress.

This research question can be better understood using the realism theory which explores the intersection between gender and technology of which gender shapes technology and the latter in turns influences gender roles and identities. For instance, women's roles have changed from being ignorant in the use of technology which limited their opportunities to becoming actively involved in technology and peacebuilding efforts. Thereby changing roles and exploiting decision making opportunities digitally.

Thirdly, the question based on whether or not there are disparities in access to and use of technological tools in peace and security contexts by women, majority of respondents 94.8% (346) accepted while 5.2% (19) did not see any significant disparity. Based on research results, a wide disparity in access and use of technology tools in peace and security contexts. The feminist theory clearly states disparities that exist in different areas such as rights and opportunities as far as gender equality is concerned and the domain of technology is not exempted especially in access and use of certain applications. Also, realism theory brings out the gendered impact of war and peace which indicates disparities for both male and female genders with the latter having the greatest blow. The figure below clearly illustrates this.

**Research question on 'Are there significant disparities in access to and utilization of technological tools in peace and security contexts?'**

**Figure 1: Observed disparities in access to and use of technological tools in peace and security contexts by women**



The fourth question based on the most significant challenge women face in contributing to peace and security efforts in their community, 41.1% (150) of respondents indicated insufficient potential support, followed by lack of education and training 38.4% (140) while few 14.0% (51) highlighted gender discrimination, and 6.6% (24) indicated safety and security concerns. This showed that gender discrimination is huge but, lack of education, training and support were the greatest barriers to women. Therefore, there is need for more support, education and training of women to delimit their challenges in contributing in peace and security efforts in their community.

Major barriers from this research were cultural norms leading and lack of education following. Others such as economic inequality and political representation were no major concerns as far as barriers women face in accessing technology were concerned. Some cultural norms which still holds that certain fields or careers are not meant for women, limit their advancements in education in such fields. Others still limit women to household tasks and childcare, leaving them less time and opportunity to engage with technology. For example, in some cultures, women's internet access are being monitored, controlled or entirely discouraged from its use especially if seen as a source of political risks to their reputation or safety. In addition to that, most online resources and digital tools are not designed with women's specific needs or concerns in mind, thus limiting their engagement and participation.

**Table 1: Main barriers in achieving gender equality**

Main barriers of achieving gender equality in your community	Accepted	Denied	Total
Cultural norms	343 (94.0%)	22 (6.0%)	365
Lack of education	339 (92.9%)	26 (7.1%)	365
Economic inequality	291 (79.7%)	74 (20.3%)	365
Political representation	184 (50.4%)	181 (49.6%)	365

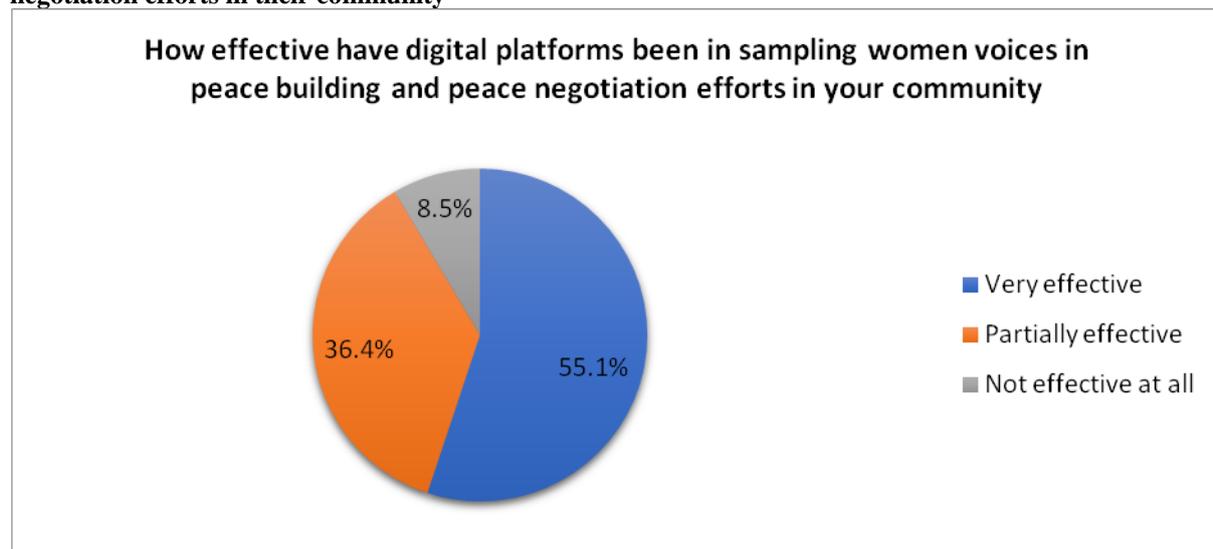
With respect to main barriers to achieving gender equality in respondents' community, cultural norms came first 94.0% (343), followed by lack of education 92.9% (339) while economic inequality was accepted by 79.7% (291) of respondents and lastly political representation 50.4% (184).

These norms can limit women's education, mobility, and overall freedom, making it difficult for them to participate fully in the digital world. Thus, technology happens to be one of such areas where people think that girls shouldn't invest their time in, thus limiting their access to such fields. Lack of education therefore in technology fields will definitely limit access in these fields. However, this trend is gradually changing especially as more girls are now drawn to STEM fields. The realism theory explains some of the barriers that women face in accessing power structures and even technology offers especially in its traditional exclusion of gender dynamics thus limiting women's progress.

Finally assessing the effectiveness of how digital platforms have been in sampling women's voices in peace building and peace negotiation efforts in their communities, slightly above average of respondents 55.1% (201) said very effective while 36.4% (133) said partially effective and only 8.5% (31) said not at all. The conclusion here is that to a moderate extent, digital platforms can be seen as a good medium to foster gender equality if women are offered proper education and training. In addition to this descriptive finding, a respondent interviewed said international bodies have used social media to advocate for women's involvement in peace and security processes although much still needs to be done as depicted in the statement;

*".....Well, I think that there are some international bodies that are doing a lot to advocate and create awareness of activities that involve women. But I also think that some of those activities are limited because they are done at the international level and social media level while there are some villages and local communities who don't know anything because of media coverage or no access to internet. So, in those villages, that is where you will find real barriers. But women are still doing a lot which calls for many partners to go into those local communities and try to bridge these gaps which are there because of norms, culture, and all that. So, I think that they are of primary importance...."* Thus, this statement shows that much work needs to be done for women's voices to be better amplified in peace and security efforts in their community. The feminist theory went a long way to emphasize the need for women's empowerment so as to make their voices heard in the society. The figure below demonstrates this research question.

**Figure 2: Effectiveness of digital platforms in sampling women voices in peace building and peace negotiation efforts in their community**



**VII. Conclusion**

After carrying out a thorough study on this topic, the following conclusions were made. On critique concerning international policies, after going through some like the UNSCR 1325(2000), the UN's Commission

on the Status of Women (CSW) and Agenda 2030 (SDG 5) explicitly acknowledged the gender digital divide, technology, and WPS reflect important normative advances, their effectiveness is undermined by weak implementation, inadequate funding, lack of coordination across sectors, and failure to adapt to fast-evolving digital and security environments. A more intersectional, grassroots-informed, and enforcement-oriented approach is needed to ensure these policies lead to meaningful, sustainable change. More still, local communities lack training in the use of advanced technology facilities like AI (artificial intelligence) or VR (virtual reality) during crisis situations even though respondents admitted that technology is helpful but not in its advanced use in crisis prevention and mediation but there is hope in the near future especially if the government and international organizations intervene to provide necessary facilities. Also, it was further concluded that there is need to integrate women and civil society organizations in peace talks be it physical or digital and above all, involve men in gender issues. On women's representation, it can be concluded that the trend has improved and there is hope for more involvement of women in peace building efforts and representation in decision making table which still stands very problematic.

### VIII. Acknowledgements

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Figure 1: Observed disparities in access to and use of technological tools in peace and security contexts by women

Figure 2: Effectiveness of digital platforms in sampling women voices in peace building and peace negotiation efforts in their community

Table 1: Main barriers in achieving gender equality

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