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CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, AND GLOBALIZATION

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CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE DURING CONFLICT:

THE CASE OF MUYUKA MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how culturally sensitive communication influences public trust and engagement in the local governance in the Southwest Region of Cameroon, specifically Muyuka Municipality. The ongoing Anglophone conflict has had a significant impact on the area, eroding community trust in local authorities. In such a tight setting, communication becomes more than just providing information. It is a means of demonstrating respect, developing relationships, and instilling a sense of belonging. This study adopted a qualitative case study approach, with data obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 20 participants from various cultural, gender, and age backgrounds. The findings demonstrate that when the council communicates in formal or unfamiliar language, or ignores local customs and emotional reality, people feel alienated, misunderstood, and are less likely to trust or participate in governance activities. However, communication that includes local dialects, a polite tone, and trustworthy cultural messengers such as chiefs or pastors fosters emotional safety and involvement. The research further discovers that some groups, particularly women and displaced people, feel excluded from public discourse, despite efforts to incorporate traditional leaders. This demonstrates that symbolic participation in which people are present but not genuinely heard can foster mistrust. The discussion is driven by the theory of Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance, which builds on ideas from Sheikh (2014) and Balzer (2024), who emphasise that communication must reflect people's emotional and cultural lives rather than simply following processes. Overall, the study contends that communication should both enlighten and connect. Communication becomes a strong instrument in conflict-affected and culturally diverse communities like Muyuka, with the potential to either foster trust or deepen divisions. For participation to be genuine and trust to resurface, leaders need to communicate in terms that people understand, appreciate who they are, and make room for all voices to be heard, particularly those who are frequently excluded. This study sheds light on how smart, inclusive communication can help repair connections between governments and residents in areas recovering from a disaster or in the middle of a crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

In local governance, communication is one of the most crucial tools. It is the way in which leaders communicate with the public, share plans, give reasons for decisions, and seek opinions. Leaders have the power to communicate with others and give them a sense of value and voice. People become closer to their leaders as a result, and trust is increased. However, communication needs to be more than just transmitting messages in areas where many cultures coexist or where there is conflict and fear. People's hearts must be touched by it. It must be respectful of their way of life, their culture, and the challenges they encounter. When we talk to people in a way that makes them feel seen, respected, and understood, we are practicing culturally sensitive communication. Without it, trust can be hindered and even the best message lost. Beyond simply creating misunderstandings, communication that disregards cultural differences also distances leaders from the people they are supposed to serve. Every group in diverse communities has a unique way of communicating, understanding and interacting with the outside world. People may feel excluded, disrespected, or unfairly judged if leaders don't acknowledge these distinctions. They might come to feel their opinions are insignificant. The trust necessary for effective governance may gradually be eroded by this sense of exclusion. People may stop providing feedback, stop attending community meetings, or become uninterested in development efforts. People are more open to leadership and communication when their culture is valued and represented in the way they are addressed (Smith, 2023). It demonstrates that leaders are concerned with both their words and their delivery. Unfortunately, this type of considerate and culturally sensitive communication is still lacking or weak in many local councils. Important messages might not be properly received as a result and chances to foster unity and cooperation are lost. This communication gap is even more dangerous in crisis and conflict-affected areas like Muyuka, where it may worsen divisions and hinders efforts at establishing peace and healing.

This study focusses on Muyuka Municipality in Cameroon's Southwest Region, where persistent violence and cultural diversity have posed significant obstacles to local governance. The Anglophone issue has caused anxiety, dislocation, and mistrust, making it difficult for authorities to engage effectively with residents from diverse cultural backgrounds. Top-down communication strategies frequently fail to connect with the public because they do not

reflect their real experiences, languages, or emotions. Scholars such as Christensen et al. (2020) emphasise that trust in government is greatly influenced by how well communication matches with people's cultural and social contexts. Bobel et al. (2022) further emphasise that cultural sensitivity in communication reduces misconceptions and builds trust, particularly during times of crisis. However, little study has been conducted on how local councils in conflict-affected areas, such as Muyuka, change their communication to encourage participation and re-establish trust. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating how cultural sensitivity in communication influence trust and public participation in local governance in Muyuka Municipality during the Anglophone crisis (2024–present). It is directed by one primary topic and three sub-questions that investigate how the community sees the council's communication style, how this influences trust, and whether cultural relevance in communication encourages or discourages citizen participation. How do citizens assess the council's communication style and language? How does culturally sensitive or insensitive communication affect trust in local government? And to what extent does communication that reflects local culture and history encourage or discourage participation in decision-making? These questions guide an in-depth exploration of how communication practices can either bridge or widen the gap between citizens and their local authorities in times of crisis.

This study is motivated by both academic interest and personal experience from my internship at the Muyuka Council, where I worked on participatory communication in pipe-borne drinking water development projects. I noticed that communication frequently broke down when leaders failed to use language and expressions that reflected people's cultures and daily lives. Many community members felt overlooked, isolated, and reluctant to engage in council events. These problems underscored the importance of local governments adapting their communication tactics to their populations' cultural reality, particularly during crises such as the Anglophone crisis. Muyuka makes an excellent case for this study because its cultural variety and conflict-affected environment highlight both the problems and opportunities of inclusive communication. By examining how the council interacts with various ethnic groups, this study investigates how communication can either foster trust and involvement or lead to misunderstanding and disconnection. The goal is not simply to improve communication in Muyuka, but also to provide valuable insights to other councils facing similar issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies discussed in this literature originate from a variety of global contexts, including Africa, Europe, Asia, North America, the Middle East, and Latin America. These numerous research settings offer useful insights into how cultural sensitivity in communication influences trust and participation in various governance systems. This review establishes a solid framework for understanding the intricate relationship between communication, culture, trust, and governance by analysing evidence from both stable and conflict-affected societies. The sections that follow will go into greater detail about these studies, highlighting the core ideas and findings that underpin this research.

Cultural Sensitivity in Communication

Cultural sensitivity is now recognised to be vital for effective communication in governance, particularly in areas with diverse cultures and conflict. Bobel et al. (2022) conducted qualitative content analysis on council communication policies and community debates in Africa and Latin America to determine how ethical communication could bring multicultural communities together after conflict. They discovered that using local languages and customs improved trust and increased engagement. In India, Srividya (2024) conducted a practice-based intervention with multicultural corporate teams, using focus groups and surveys before and after to assess how cultural sensitivity training could improve teamwork. The result was improved teamwork, less misunderstanding, and increased empathy. Penna (2023) conducted interviews and long-term participatory observation in Australia to investigate communication between Aboriginal people and local authorities, with the goal of learning how to improve intercultural communication skills. She discovered that listening, patience, and cultural respect were essential, and when these qualities were lacking, marginalised people withdrew from government. In Southeast Asia, Kowalski (2023) conducted a multi-site case study during disaster response programs to investigate how communication influences recovery in ethnic settings. She noticed that a lack of cultural sensitivity led to resistance, misinformation, and ineffective cooperation. Lastly, in multilingual Canadian cities, Boudreau (2023) conducted surveys and participatory community forums to investigate how inclusive communication influences civic involvement. He discovered that incorporating minorities in message

production, utilising community symbols and stories, and bringing in cultural leaders resulted in increased engagement and equality. While these studies clearly demonstrate the importance of cultural awareness, the majority were conducted in quiet, organised settings. Little study has been conducted in war zones such as Muyuka Municipality in Cameroon, where various cultural groups are still experiencing difficulties because of the Anglophone crisis. This study will look at how local government communication in Muyuka in 2024 influences trust and citizen engagement in these communities.

Cultural Sensitivity in Trust Building

Cultural sensitivity is essential in developing public trust, particularly in diverse or conflict-affected communities. Combining surveys and interviews in Scandinavian municipalities, Christensen et al. (2020) discovered that when people's cultural identities are recognised, they trust local governments more. In multicultural contexts, Smith (2023) demonstrated through interviews that trust increases when governments adopt language and values that are compatible with minority groups otherwise, people feel alienated. In the United States, Goldsmith (2022) employed policy reviews and fieldwork to demonstrate that collaborating with cultural and religious leaders helps repair trust in unequal communities. In Bangladesh, Tanny et al. (2019) conducted surveys and interviews and discovered that adopting local customs and languages enhanced public engagement and trust in leadership. In a global study based on data from crisis-hit cities, Eggers et al. (2021) discovered that even reliable services can be mistrusted if not given in a culturally sensitive manner. In the Middle East, Hasan (2018) and Moti (2019) shown through case studies that displaced groups remained sceptical when peacekeepers neglected local languages and customs. Using survey data from European towns, Sobiech (2016) discovered that trust in the aftermath of an economic crisis is dependent on fair and responsive communication, not only services. In Latin America, Dann (2022) discovered that culturally uninformed leaders were perceived as more corrupt, even when performing well. Finally, in a meta-analysis of 300 studies, Balliet and Van Lange (2013) discovered that trust is lowest when there is a power imbalance or cultural misunderstanding but increases with culturally sensitive governance. While these studies provide compelling data, the majority focus on calm or post-crisis settings. This study investigates how cultural

sensitivity in communication influences trust and engagement in Muyuka Municipality, where conflict and mistrust persist.

Public Participation in Governance

Public engagement is critical to inclusive governance, but it works best when cultural norms are upheld. Quick, Bryson, and Yang (2016) evaluated global literature and discovered that participation improves services and legitimacy when multiple voices are included, even though their study had no specific location. In Europe, Bobbio (2018) employed design workshops and interviews to demonstrate that jointly developed policies are more popular with citizens than top-down judgements. Using ethnographic study in Southern Europe, Ricciardelli (2017) discovered that shared identity and culturally appropriate communication increase cooperation and trust. Yi and Qiu (2024) analysed cases from Africa, North America, and Asia and concluded that merging cultural values with democratic processes is the most effective way to increase public participation. Jäntti and Paananen (2023) found that in Tanzania and Kenya, decentralisation only improved engagement when authorities used culturally sensitive communication channels, emphasising the importance of emotional and cultural relationships in addition to physical closeness. Winsvold, McLeod, and Hakim (2023), through a study in Nordic and post-Soviet cities, discovered that when authorities honour local cultural identities, participation rates increase. Sithole (2020) discovered that cultural marginalisation and poor services were primary reasons individuals avoided public forums, emphasising the importance of culturally grounded involvement rather than merely formal gatherings. Overall, these studies demonstrate that citizen engagement improves when governance is culturally inclusive, but the majority are from peaceful or recovering regions. This research focusses on Muyuka Municipality, where the Anglophone conflict persists, to see if cultural sensitivity in communication enables displaced and varied communities to participate effectively in local governance.

The Anglophone Crisis and Local Governance

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon began in 2016 when teachers and lawyers in English-speaking regions opposed the marginalisation of their legal and educational systems. The government's brutal response caused widespread unrest. Beseng et al. (2023) conducted field

interviews and observations in the Northwest and Southwest regions to demonstrate that state violence harmed institutional trust. Simpeh (2019) undertook a political and archival analysis of colonial legacies, finding how structural disparities caused by separation into British and French zones barred Anglophones from political participation. Musah (2022) examined policy documents and public discourse post-2016, concluding that symbolic, top-down improvements increased mistrust. Begealawuh (2024) analysed national dialogue transcripts and interviewed political figures in Yaoundé, concluding that the absence of significant separatist voices, as well as a lack of cultural acknowledgement, rendered peace discussions invalid. Mafany (2022) carried out field research and analysed third-party reports from conflict zones, documenting human rights violations and observing a significant decline in civic trust and engagement. Haider (2009) discovered, through comparative case studies in post-conflict areas, that governance recovery is dependent on emotional healing and cultural respect. Shenk (2022), who conducted interviews and community observations in Colombia, discovered that trauma, fear, and identity neglect, diminish political engagement. These studies show how violence, exclusion, and top-down tactics hinder trust and participation, but they leave out how local councils like Muyuka's try to communicate with displaced, culturally diverse people. This study addresses that gap by looking at culturally responsive communication methods in Muyuka Municipality from 2024 to the present.

Cultural Sensitivity: A Tool for Building Trust and Participation

Several scholars have investigated how cultural sensitivity builds trust and promotes citizen engagement. In Yemen, Al-Sofi (2015) employed focus groups and interviews amid a political crisis to demonstrate that respectful communication of religious and cultural beliefs increased community cooperation. Winkelman (2005) discovered that identifying cultural backgrounds reduced conflict and increased satisfaction in US health and community services through a combination of literature study and observations. Using case studies and interviews in multicultural UK cities, Jennings et al. (2021) through case-studies and interviews in multicultural cities in the UK, demonstrated that culturally responsive crisis communication reduced public fear and increased trust. Winsvold et al. (2023) conducted municipal surveys and community interviews in Norway and Eastern Europe and discovered that inclusive practices such as cultural facilitators and local languages boosted civic involvement and trust.

In Indonesia, Burhanudin et al. (2022) utilizes surveys and participatory rural evaluation and founded that, when local leaders communicated with cultural sensitivity, locals were more involved. While these studies demonstrate that cultural sensitivity increases involvement, they primarily focus on national policies in stable or post-conflict environments. This study fills a gap by focussing on the Muyuka municipality amid the ongoing Anglophone issue in Cameroon and investigating whether and how the local council uses culturally sensitive communication to engage its diverse community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance: A Dual-Theory Lens

This theoretical framework draws on two key studies from around the globe to provide a clear lens through which to examine the Muyuka Council's methods of communication. The first is Sheikh's (2014) study on participatory governance, which is based on South Asian experiences and demonstrates how decentralisation, bringing decision-making closer to local communities may encourage public participation and decision making more inclusive. The second is Balzer's (2024) work on cultural sensitivity in communication, which is based on European research and examines how customising communications to different cultural backgrounds helps foster trust as well as engagement among different groups. These two studies are not just offered in a broad or background manner rather, they serve as the foundation of the research and are actively used to make sense of the data in this research. While the literature review has already offered broad definitions and context for participatory communication and cultural diversity, this theoretical framework takes a more particular role in shaping how the data is perceived. It does this through four main concepts: inclusion and participation, which examine whether individuals from all groups are active; trust and accountability, which look at the level of trust people have in the council and its transparency; and cultural awareness, which evaluates how well communication respects cultural variations; and local ownership and empowerment, which investigate whether members of the community perceive control and influence over decisions. These studies work together to help build up the theory to practice in a meaningful way.

Participatory Governance: Structures and Their Limitations in Crisis Situations

Sheikh's (2014) study on participatory governance enables my investigation into how the Muyuka Council engages residents in decision-making, particularly during the ongoing crisis. His research goes beyond examining formal platforms such as meetings and committees, it focusses on how people feel about participating. Many people in conflict areas, such as Muyuka, may boycott local government activities because of fear, isolation, or mistrust. This hypothesis aids the investigation of these hidden emotional and social constraints. It enquires whether individuals feel protected, respected, and heard, not simply whether structures exist.

Tanny et al. (2019) supported this by demonstrating that culturally sensitive communication promotes involvement in diverse societies. Using Sheikh's principles, this study determines whether the council's communication fosters genuine trust and inclusion, or if it simply follows procedures without engaging citizens.

Cultural Sensitivity in Communication

Balzer's (2024) concept of cultural sensitivity in communication is relevant to this study since it demonstrates how the way local leaders interact with people can either develop or shatter trust, particularly during crises. This method goes beyond simply being professional; it examines whether official communication, such as that of the Muyuka Council, accurately portrays people's daily lives, feelings, languages, and cultures. The study employs Balzer's work to determine whether the council's messages are communicated in a way that people can relate to and respect, particularly given the agony caused by the continuing Anglophone crisis. Penna (2023) agrees, stating that effective crisis communication is about connecting emotionally and respecting people's past experiences. The language, messenger, and tone used to deliver messages are just as important as the substance itself. Communication that is transparent, trustworthy, and empathic promotes trust and involvement. However, if it appears detached or opposed, residents may feel even more separated from local government. Balzer's study contributes to this research's understanding of communication as a powerful tool that may either include or exclude individuals, and the study investigates whether the Muyuka Council's communication brings the community together or divides it at a time when unity is most needed.

The Role of Communication in Shaping Trust

This study employs theory to investigate how communication from Muyuka's local administration influences people's trust, particularly during the Anglophone conflict. Instead of evaluating trust solely through facts or figures, it focusses on how individuals feel when they hear or engage with authority, considering message tone, clarity, and cultural respect (Balzer, 2024; Christensen et al., 2020). Trust is viewed as an emotional and social component that grows when people feel respected and understood, particularly in an environment marked by fear and loss. The study asks citizens whether they believe the council truly understands their

problems and treats them with care and respect. It demonstrates that communication is more than just giving information, it is also about developing or destroying connections, and it investigates whether council messages assist heal or worsen problems by focussing on people's own stories and feelings.

Application of Theory to the Study

The Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance theory illustrates how Muyuka's local government involves or fails to involve its citizens in decision-making. While local institutions exist, many inhabitants remain disengaged due to a lack of trust and continuous marginalisation, particularly among Anglophone communities (Alessandro et al., 2021). This is when cultural sensitivity in communication becomes critical. Government officials must communicate in ways that respect local cultures, languages, and feelings (Balzer, 2024). Without this, true participation is difficult to acquire. People in Muyuka struggle to trust the council due to cultural and linguistic disparities, as well as historical issues and political difficulties. Meetings and forums are not enough. Good governance requires communication that respects cultural identity, traditional leaders, and community history (Sheikh, 2014). By merging concepts from these fundamental studies, this research demonstrates that boosting Muyuka involvement requires not just structures but also better, more inclusive communication particularly in conflict affected and diverse cultural communities.

Understanding the Theoretical Framework and Its Distinction from the Literature

The literature review for this study examines what numerous experts around the world have said regarding cultural sensitivity, public trust, and participation in government, demonstrating what has been explored and what remains unanswered, particularly during conflicts. However, the theoretical framework differs in that it focusses on two specific studies: Sheikh's (2014) on participatory governance and Balzer's (2024) on cultural sensitivity in communication. These two studies serve as the primary data analysis tools, allowing us to determine whether Muyuka locals feel involved, appreciated, and trust the council's communication. The framework centres on four key concepts: inclusion and participation, trust and accountability, cultural awareness, and local ownership and empowerment. This obvious distinction between a broad

literature review and a specific theory helps to avoid confusion, with the literature providing background information and the theory providing a clear way to clarify the study's findings.

Importance of the Theory to the Study

This theory was chosen because it lays a solid framework for analysing the relationship between individuals and local governments in conflict zones such as Muyuka. Sheikh (2014) demonstrates how inclusive structures can increase involvement and accountability, while Balzer (2024) emphasises the necessity of communication that reflects cultural identity and emotions to develop trust. This is especially true in Muyuka, where many people feel displaced, disadvantaged, and mistrust of the government. By combining these studies, the theory enables researchers to investigate not just how participation is organised, but also how people experience and respond to culturally tailored communication. However, because both research were conducted mostly in peaceful or recovering environments, they do not fully explain how trust and involvement function during continuing conflict. This study addresses that gap by applying the theory to Muyuka's current dilemma, demonstrating how sensitive communication can influence people's desire to trust and participate in governance during times of fear and uncertainty. The theory also influenced the research design, including interview questions regarding language use, emotional tone, and local norms, as well as the analysis, which focused on trust, inclusion, and respect. Overall, the combined approach demonstrates that governance is more than just formal meetings or systems, it is determined by how leaders engage and connect with communities, particularly in fragile, conflict-affected places where trust is rapidly lost.

Suggestions to Overcome the Shortcomings from the Theory

The theory provides a solid foundation for understanding how communication influences participation, but it believes that simply having venues such as local councils or public forums results in citizen involvement. This idea is incorrect in conflict-affected areas like as Muyuka, where people require more than just access, they also demand trust, safety, and emotional readiness to participate. To address this, the study employs a trauma-based methodology and interviews to demonstrate how fear, insecurity, and previous experiences influence involvement, as well as emotional and psychological elements that the theory does not

account for. The idea also fails in current conflict settings since it was mostly studied in peaceful or post-conflict countries, limiting its potential to explain communication in areas with active violence and displacement. By focussing on Muyuka's real-life conflict situation, the study demonstrates how communication may either foster healing or cause separation, broadening the theory to accommodate current events. Furthermore, the theory lacks solid support from conflict zones, as most research is conducted in calm conditions. This study fills that gap by collecting data from persons experiencing instability, providing real-world insights that assist refine the theory for crisis situations. Finally, the theory does not adequately account for how past injustices and political marginalisation affect community trust and responses to governance communication. Using a historically based methodology, the study reveals how past grievances impact current participation and trust, resulting in a fuller understanding of communication in local governments. Therefore, while this theory provides useful tools, its shortcomings must be addressed before it can be applied in conflict-affected areas. This study aims to address such limits by empirically applying the theory, including emotional and cultural factors, and basing the analysis in historical and political realities, all of which contribute to the theory's strength and adjustment to real-world challenges.

Applying the Four Theoretical Elements to the Study

This theory is governed by four interconnected elements drawn from the two primary studies: inclusion and engagement, trust and accountability, cultural awareness, and community ownership and empowerment. First, inclusion and engagement are assessed by determining whether Muyuka's decentralised structures, such as community meetings or organisations, allow individuals to participate in decision-making. Second, trust and accountability are utilised to determine whether the tone, openness, and honesty of local leaders' words contribute to people feeling respected and willing to engage. Third, cultural awareness is demonstrated by determining whether the Council's communication represents people's languages, customs, values, and previous experiences. It includes the involvement of traditional leaders and the council's consideration of the community's diversity. Fourth, local ownership and empowerment consider whether people believe the government method belongs to them and that their views matter. This indicates in whether citizens believe they have control or influence, rather than just attendance. As the researcher, my contribution is to

combine the four elements: inclusion and participation, trust and accountability, cultural awareness, and local ownership and empowerment into a single coherent framework appropriate for a conflict-affected community like Muyuka. While these elements are frequently employed separately in stable settings, I combine them to investigate not only the methods of participation, but also the emotional, cultural, and historical factors that influence involvement. This integrated Approach enables me to design culturally grounded interviews and focus my analysis on how communication affects engagement on the ground.

METHODOLOGY

This study's methodology is aimed to answer the research question: "How does cultural sensitivity in communication influence trust and public participation in local governance in Muyuka Municipality during the Anglophone Crisis (2024-present)?" To address this, the research focused on studying community members' lived experiences, opinions, and behaviours. Given the nature of the enquiry, which required a thorough investigation of human relationships and societal circumstances, a qualitative research approach was the best fit. As Muhammad Hassan (2024) points out, qualitative research is especially useful for investigating personal experiences and understanding the deeper meanings behind people's ideas and actions. Unlike quantitative methods, which rely on numerical data, qualitative research offered a deep and contextual knowledge of how cultural sensitivity in communication influenced trust and public participation in governance (Hassan 2024). This approach enables the researchers to find intricate social patterns, emotional responses, and the underlying causes of people's degrees of trust and engagement. Rich narratives were acquired through interviews, and focus group discussions, providing for a more nuanced understanding of how communication strategies effected relationships between local authorities and community members.

Ontology and Epistemology

This study centres on a relativist ontology and a constructivist epistemology, both of which are consistent with the study's goal of investigating how cultural sensitivity in communication influences trust and participation in government during a crisis. A relativist ontology holds that reality is neither objective or unchanging, but rather affected by people's personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and historical situations (Levers 2013). According to Levers (2013), humans do not all experience the world in the same way; what is true or real for a particular individual may not be for another. Individuals' perspectives of government, trust, and communication in Muyuka are impacted by their unique experiences with the crisis and cultural identities, as per the study's context. As stated by Boon et al. (2022), a constructivist epistemology maintains that knowledge is produced through interactions with people and the interpretation of lived occurrences, rather than discovered. This is consistent with Chitvan

Trivedi's (2020) assertion that meaning is not universal but is formed by individuals base on the situation. In this study, knowledge concerning trust and communication is derived from participants' personal narratives, perceptions, and sentiments, rather than general assumptions or statistics. Using this perspective, it enables the researcher to be able to delve deeply into how participants create meaning around their trust or scepticism of local authorities, as well as their readiness or reluctance to participate in governance. It also emphasised the role of cultural and emotional factors in affecting people's perceptions of governance communication.

Together, these philosophical viewpoints provide support to a methodology that emphasises the individualistic and emotional realities of people living in a culturally diverse and conflict-affected community. They made it possible to capture the complex and different ways participants make meaning of culturally sensitive communication and the effect it has on their engagement with local governance.

Research Design

The research design is the plan that guides how a study is conducted. It integrates several aspects of the research in a clear and logical manner to ensure that the subject matter is adequately addressed (Thakur, 2021). It also assists the researcher in determining how to gather data, which methods to utilise (such as interviews or surveys), and how to choose participants (Al-Ababneh, 2020). A strong research design guarantees that the study remains focused and organised from beginning to end. This study employs a qualitative research design with an exploratory focus. This approach is effective when researching issues that are unfamiliar or have not been thoroughly investigated (Hassan, 2024). Its primary objective is to assist the researcher in understanding new patterns, experiences, and ideas. This study investigates how cultural sensitivity in communication influences trust and participation in local governance in Muyuka, a topic that has gotten little attention till now. As Chris Drew (2023) says, exploratory research allows the researcher to remain open to new views, which is critical when dealing with complicated societal challenges such as crisis governance.

Case Study

This study employs a case study design centred on Muyuka Municipality to acquire a thorough knowledge of how cultural sensitivity in communication influences governance and trust in a crisis context. A case study is appropriate because it allows the researcher to closely investigate real-life scenarios and analyse the nuances involved, rather than focusing solely on generic trends or data (McCombes, 2023). The illustration of the Muyuka municipality is particularly noteworthy because it represents towns in conflict-affected areas where continuous crises have altered communication dynamics between local governments and the general population. Unlike municipalities in more stable locations, Muyuka confronts unique issues, such as increased distrust in government officials and shifts in public perception regarding administration because of prolonged instability. However, Muyuka is not on its own, since other municipalities experiencing violence or political instability may have comparable communication issues. The study of Muyuka gives lessons that could be applied to other crisis-affected regions, both in Cameroon and elsewhere. The findings can help explain how local governments in such situations can employ culturally sensitive communication to reestablish trust and encourage citizen engagement. Furthermore, limiting the study to a single municipality act as an advantage by providing a better understanding of the situation while allowing for a thorough assessment of governance strategies, cultural influences, and community engagement in a real-world context.

Inductive Approach

This study employed an inductive approach, which means it begins by gathering data and then develops hypotheses or conclusions based on what the evidence reveals (Vijayamohan, 2024). Rather than starting with a predetermined idea, the researcher seeks for patterns and themes in the participants' responses. This makes the method more adaptable and open to fresh ideas. This strategy is particularly beneficial for investigating cultural sensitivity in communication dealing with crises. In locations like Muyuka, where conflict influences how people interact with their government, it's critical not to rely too heavily on established notions. This approach ensures that the findings are accurate and founded in reality, by focussing on real-life experiences of members of the community. It enables the research to explore how

communication influences trust and engagement in a way that is true to the local context of the Anglophone problem.

Methods of Data Collection

The data for this study were collected using two methods, Semi-structured interviews and Focus group discussions. These strategies were utilised to elicit detailed insights from participants, providing for a more complete knowledge of their experiences and viewpoints on the issue.

Semi Structured Interview

This study collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. This method entails asking a series of prepared questions while also allowing participants to communicate their thoughts in greater depth or suggest new ideas (Mashuri et al., 2022). It is particularly effective for delving into complicated themes such as cultural sensitivity in governance since it strikes a balance between structure and flexibility. To gather diverse perspectives, interviews were conducted with a wide spectrum of participants, including local government officials, community leaders, and residents from various cultural backgrounds. This strategy allows participants to speak honestly about their own experiences without being constrained to brief or set responses, resulting in deeper and more honest insights (Maria, 2023). By focussing on open-ended responses, the study was able to investigate how cultural sensitivity influences communication and public trust in government using real-life experiences rather than researcher preconceived notions.

For this study, 20 participants were interviewed, with attention taken to account for differences in gender, age (20 and above), and cultural background. Both men and women from different parts of the town participated. To ensure a diverse range of perspectives, the study used purposeful sampling, which means that participants were chosen based on specified characteristics like as cultural identity and personal experience with the community (Nikolopoulou, 2023). This strategy facilitates the collection of more relevant opinions, particularly on how cultural sensitivity influences communication and trust in local governance. Random sampling may not have recorded the views of all cultural groups, which

is significant because the study aims to determine if everyone feels included or if some groups are overlooked or misunderstood. By selecting a varied population, the study provides valuable insights into what works and what needs to be improved in how councils interact.

The interviews were performed online through Zoom to make things easier and more comfortable for the participants. Being in a familiar situation allowed people to express themselves more freely. According to Archibald et al. (2019), 69% of participants chose Zoom over phone or email because seeing the interviewer made the experience more personal. However, the study also found that 88% of Zoom consumers had challenges such as inadequate internet connection or difficulty utilising their devices. To alleviate these concerns, participants were briefed about the platform ahead of time and given technical assistance. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, allowing for in-depth conversation without exhausting participants. This strategy aided in the development of meaningful interactions while ensuring that technological issues were not a barrier. Before the interview, Participants were told about the study's goal, duration, and privacy measures prior to the interviews with the aim to foster a polite and accepting environment. Building trust was critical, especially when addressing difficult matters, because it ensures that the information supplied is accurate and reliable (Lainsi et al., 2024). Each interview consisted of 15 open-ended questions about how cultural sensitivity in communication influences trust and public engagement in governance during the Anglophone crisis. This style enabled participants to talk freely and convey significant experiences without being constrained by predetermined responses (Maria, 2023). To delve deeper into crucial themes, follow-up questions were asked. All interviews were recorded with the participants' permission, and they were informed that the recordings were exclusively for this study and that they might cease or withdraw consent at any moment. Notes were also taken to record tone and pauses. To safeguard privacy, names were deleted from transcripts and participants were given numbers such as Participant 1, 2, and so on. All data recordings, notes, and transcripts were kept in a secure, password-protected system that was only accessible to the research team. After the research is completed, the data will be securely erased or saved for academic purposes. These procedures made participants feel protected and appreciated, allowing them to speak freely about their experiences.

Focus Group Discussion

Two focus groups were held with the goal to gain a better understanding of how cultural sensitivity in communication affects public involvement and confidence in Muyuka Municipality. By giving participants, the chance to engage, exchange narratives, and consider other viewpoints on governance communication, these conversations enhanced one-on-one interviews (Basnet, 2018). The same 20 participants participated, guaranteeing data continuity while fostering group interactions that yield fresh insights. They were split into two groups of ten, each with an equal number of men and women, with the objective to preserve equilibrium and promote a range of perspectives. For ease and accessibility, the discussions took place virtually using Zoom, considering any security and geographic issues brought on by the continuing Anglophone conflict.

Each focus group discussion lasted two and a half hours to keep participants engaged while delving deeply into the topic. It began with an hour of discussion about how cultural sensitivity in communication influences trust and involvement in local government during the crisis. Then there was a 30-minute break for informal conversation to create a welcoming environment. The final hour allowed participants to discuss more and express fresh issues. I led the discussion with the assistance of a local community moderator, who guided talks, took notes, observed how individuals behaved, and resolved any issues. Their local knowledge helped everyone feel at ease and open. We recorded the meetings with permission and took detailed notes on tone and mood. Transcripts were kept private and utilised strictly for research. Participants understood that they could join or leave at any moment. Unlike one-on-one interviews, focus groups promote group discussions and shared perspectives, resulting in a better understanding of cultural difficulties in government communication. This strategy demonstrates if cultural groups feel excluded or whether communication fosters or undermines trust. The group discussions showed the true issues that various ethnic groups in Muyuka face with the local authorities.

Thematic Analysis

To analyse the data acquired from interviews and focus group discussions, I employed thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of

meaning (themes) within a dataset (McLeod, 2024). This approach is very valuable for my research because it helps to investigate how cultural sensitivity in communication influences trust and public participation in governance. Because my research is based on participants' own experiences and views, thematic analysis gave a structured method for uncovering crucial insights from their stories. While the study is based on participants' experiences and opinions, my role was to analyse these responses, identify key themes, and connect them to the study's research question and theoretical framework.

Thematic analysis was carried out in six steps: familiarisation with the data, coding, theme identification, theme review, theme analysis, and final analysis (McLeod, 2024). First, there was carefully reading of interviews and focus group transcripts several times to identify key trends (Christou, 2023). Because some participants used non-English language or slang, transcripts were published exactly as spoken before translation to preserve the true meaning. Coding was then used to label essential elements of the data, making them easier to understand (Linneberg et al., 2019). I employed both manual coding and NVivo software to ensure accuracy. Codes such as feeling excluded from decisions, language barriers, belief in leaders, and a history of engagement were employed. Then, comparable codes were combined into larger themes that demonstrated major trends, such as language difficulties driving exclusion or trust issues resulting from previous actions by the government. After that, I carefully reviewed the themes against the transcripts to ensure they matched what the participants stated and corrected any inconsistency. I also examined how themes related to the research topic. Themes were clearly described utilising actual comments from participants (Mishra et al., 2022), such as how previous government failures reduced people's willingness to participate in decisions. Finally, I analysed the themes of the research and theory, demonstrating how cultural sensitivity influences trust and involvement in government. Unexpected findings were also investigated, and strategies for improving communication in different groups were presented. This strategy assures that the results accurately reflect the participants' true experiences and voices.

Limitations and Strategies in Data Collections

There were some difficulties when employing the recommended procedures, but they were managed effectively. A significant barrier was not being able to conduct face-to-face interviews because I was not physically there in the field. So, all interviews and focus groups were conducted online. This initially appeared to be an issue, but it turned out to be beneficial. The online model allowed people from all around Muyuka to participate, including those in remote or dangerous places due to continuous violence. Some issues, such as bad internet and scheduling across time zones, arose but were resolved by being flexible and rescheduling as needed. When individuals didn't understand an issue, I explained or rephrased it right away and offered translation support. This ensured that the data accurately reflected what the participants thought and experienced. Furthermore, because the Anglophone situation is politically sensitive, several people were reluctant to contribute at first. I handled this by keeping things private, establishing trust before interviews, and allowing participants to speak in their native language. Many people reported the online setting allowed them to communicate more freely from home without fear of being watched. Overall, the internet option allowed more voices from across Muyuka to be heard safely. In a nutshell, while some practical restrictions arose, such as the lack of physical presence and dependency on virtual communication, these issues were addressed thoughtfully and adaptively. The online approach's flexibility and inclusivity eventually improved the study process, ensuring that useful ideas were acquired efficiently despite the limits.

ANALYSIS

This chapter analyses data acquired through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with people from various cultural backgrounds in Muyuka Municipality. The study focusses on how cultural sensitivity in communication influences public engagement and trust in local government, particularly amid the current Anglophone crisis. The interviews revealed five major themes, reflecting the perspectives of council workers and community members: the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication, the role of traditional and religious leaders, the effect of language and tone, the exclusion of displaced migrants, and the impact of gender roles on participation. These themes explain how Muyuka residents have responded to council communications throughout this crisis. The analysis also connects these actual experiences to the theory and ideas discussed previously in the literature review.

Theme 1: Cultural Sensitivity in Communication during the Anglophone crisis

Cultural sensitivity in communication has become crucial in determining how residents of Muyuka Municipality react to local governance initiatives during the ongoing Anglophone crisis. When various ethnic groups, languages, and traditional beliefs coexist in a community, the way messages are spread, and who delivers them can either foster trust or increase mistrust. People have grown increasingly anxious of their identities and values because of the conflict's increased tensions, fear, and displacement. As a result, the council or government representatives frequently encounter resistance, scepticism, or silence when they communicate in a way that does not respect or represent the cultural realities of the community. This theme examines how people from different backgrounds' willingness to trust the council and take part in decision-making processes during this trying time has been impacted by cultural sensitivity. For example, a 25-year-old farmer from the Balong community expressed in pidgin: "Since the time di Anglophone problem start for we here so, people di fear government dem. But if you wan talk for we, you need for first understand wah own way because e no be possible say we di understand we na wah contri-talk or pidgin then you like government cam di talk for we na fo French language how dem expect say we go hear? Then for ma village wey I comot if you no pass through chief or quarter head dem no go take you serious because na wah own cultural way that wey you as government must respect am but the council no di

always respect that process wey e di make am some people di vex and no wan for hear anything from dem again."

Translation: "People have been terrified of the government ever since the Anglophone issue began here. However, you must first comprehend how we operate if you wish to communicate with us. You, like the government, come and talk to us only in French, which makes it impossible for us to understand you if we speak Pidgin or our native tongue. How do they think we will comprehend? Additionally, people in my hometown won't take you seriously if you don't go through the chief or the quarter-head because that is how we do things in our culture, and the government needs to honour that. However, the council does not always adhere to this procedure, which annoys some people and makes them resistant" (Translated by the author from pidgin-English to English). This participant's reaction demonstrates how the council's usage of French rather than Pidgin or local languages fosters a deep sense of isolation among community members who are already marginalised because of the Anglophone problem. His focus on traditional communication systems, such as conveying messages through chiefs or quarter-heads, demonstrates that breaking cultural standards is viewed as not just disrespectful, but also as a purposeful rejection of group identity. This is consistent with Balzer's belief that language and cultural recognition are critical for developing trust. The participant's frustration demonstrates that bad communication techniques do more than just fail to inform, they actively push people away, fostering mistrust and opposition to governance attempts. Furthermore, a 40-year-old female Bakweri traditional leader commented "Sometimes the issue is not what is being said, but rather who is saying it and how. People are traumatized during crisis, and many would rather listen to those they can trust. The council mostly overlooks the fact that in our culture, messages must first go through certain people, like the women's leaders, elders, and chiefs. It becomes so disrespectful to skip these steps. They don't always listen to the advice that some of us have tried to give them. Particularly in the present, this is not how trust is being done." This participant emphasises that in crisis situations, trust is based not just on the message but also on who delivers it and how. Her statement demonstrates that the council's failure to include trusted community representatives such as women's leaders, elders, and chiefs breaches cultural norms and undermines credibility. In a climate of trauma and terror, such carelessness is interpreted as a

disregard for communal structures rather than a mistake. Her dissatisfaction reflects a broader breakdown in trust, in which exclusion from the communication process fosters emotions of neglect. This represents the theoretical claim that trust and accountability are developed through culturally grounded relationships, rather than top-down messages. Moreso, a 32-year-old male teacher from the Hausa migrant community mentioned "Although I can appreciate the pressure the council is under in hard times like this, they must also recognize the many kinds of cultures present in Muyuka. Not everyone can be reached with the same message or tone. When you involve cultural leaders and speak calmly, some people respond better. Others seek examples that are concrete in their native tongue. Being culturally sensitive requires adapting to the situation. However, the council's communication is currently too formal and disconnected from our realities, making many people feel excluded." The respondent's view agrees with Balzer's (2024) idea, which emphasises the importance of culturally sensitive communication that considers people's lived experiences, languages, and emotional needs. His observation that the council's formal tone appears detached demonstrates a lack of cultural knowledge. Without tailoring communication to varied populations, as Balzer warns, trust and involvement suffer, especially in a crisis community like Muyuka. In addition, a 45-year-old male council worker from the Balong community explained "We have worked hard to adjust to the local communities. We do not disregard culture. We have collaborated closely with community groups and chiefs on numerous projects involving outreach but, we are also limited because we are unable to speak all the local tongues and occasionally, we are unable to spend enough time in each village due to security concerns. I think we are doing our best to show respect. Even when we arrive with the best of intentions, some people are simply too suspicious due to the crisis." This individual share the council's perspective, emphasising efforts to respect culture through collaboration with chiefs and local groups. However, he recognises that linguistic difficulties and risks to security hinder engagement. His viewpoint is consistent with Sheikh's (2014) idea, demonstrating that participatory structures can exist but may fail if emotional trust and cultural connection are not established. The crisis setting heightens public scepticism, so intentions alone are insufficient, delivery must be legitimate and culturally solid. A 30-year-old female nurse from Ngemba ethnic group Northwest Region mentioned in pidgin-English "Di crisis don bring down plenty trust. So now so when council

people dem di cam for wah area, how dem go take talk for we be very important. If dem show say dem no care for wah own lifestyle, na so wah people them too go turn their back from them. Even for hospital patient dem sef-sef want make you treat them with respect, no be only for give them medicine. So, if the local government want make people follow dem, dem get for show genuine cultural respect no be only for di talk big talk for paper."

Translation: "Many trusts have been destroyed by the crisis. Therefore, how council members speak to us now matters a lot when they visit our area. Our people will abandon them as well if they give the impression that they don't care about our way of life. Patients want to be respected, not just given medication, even in the hospital. Therefore, rather than merely using fancy words on paper, the local government must demonstrate genuine cultural respect if they want people to work with them." (Translated by the author from pidgin-English to English). This participant emphasises the fact that trust, which is already undermined by the crisis, is greatly dependent on how the council demonstrates cultural respect. She emphasises the importance of respect and involvement, stating that people would not engage if they believed their way of life is being disrespected. Her example from healthcare exemplifies Balzer's study that communication must be emotionally sensitive and culturally based. In her opinion, actions, not just words, foster trust, particularly in a post-crisis atmosphere where people are cautious and hurt. A 38-year-old male chief from the Bangwa community further postulated "To be honest, some council workers are making efforts, but others showed up with pride. They talk and act like they are experts. In our culture, you don't talk to elders like that. People are now more aware and mindful of tone and respect because of the crisis. You must get out of your high position and walk among the people if you want to earn their trust right now. Speak their language, sit with them, and feel their suffering." The respondent emphasises that, while some council workers attempts, others are arrogant, which contradicts cultural standards of humility and respect, particularly towards elders. He maintains that meaningful connection now necessitates humility, empathy, and shared presence, not authority. This supports Balzer's (2024) idea that leaders build trust by communicating in ways that mirror people's emotional realities. Even well-intentioned efforts may be perceived as detached and disrespectful if cultural humility is lacking. Lastly, a 21-year-old university student from the Oroko community shared his opinion "in my own opinion, the council has tried to get in touch with us, particularly

during this crisis. Everyone is feeling nervous, so it's difficult for them as well. However, I have seen them attempting to communicate in a more polite manner, especially during community events and working together with our chiefs. Also, they invited young leaders, which, in my opinion, shows their efforts to be culturally prepared. At least they are not ignoring us, even though they are not perfect. Although I believe the council is now trying to listen and include more voices, some of my friends still believe the government doesn't care enough but to me they are trying especially in these difficult times." This viewpoint offers a more balanced picture, acknowledging that, while the council is not perfect, it is making clear attempts to promote culturally appropriate communication. Actions such as incorporating chiefs and inviting youth leaders indicate a shift towards inclusivity and local engagement. However, the student also mentions a trust gap, stating that some people still feel excluded. This supports Balzer's (2024) study that cultural sensitivity must be constant and extensive to properly repair trust. Occasional efforts are inadequate, people judge sincerity based on patterns, not isolated events.

The results demonstrate that establishing or destroying trust and participation in local governance is significantly influenced by the cultural sensitivity in the council's communication. based on the responses from diverse individuals shows that, People feel appreciated and are more inclined to participate in community affairs when the council honours local customs, listens to them, and speaks in their native tongues. However, disregarding these cultural factors by the council promotes disapproval and reduces participation. This is in line with the study's theory from Sheikh's (2014) argument that leaders need to work closely with the community and have a thorough understanding of their way of life so as for people to genuinely participate in governance, and from Balzer's (2024) study, which explains that communication needs to demonstrate an awareness of people's cultural backgrounds in addition to providing information. Trust cannot develop without this. Therefore, culturally sensitive communication is not only beneficial but also essential for restoring trust in the public and motivating citizens to participate in local governance in a conflict-affected area like Muyuka.

Theme 2: The Role of Religious and Traditional Leaders in facilitating Culturally Sensitive Communication

In Muyuka Municipality, where many people still hold strong ties to their traditions and spiritual beliefs, traditional rulers and religious leaders often serve as trusted messengers and peacekeepers, especially during crisis. Their voice carries cultural weight and emotional connection. Some participants say the local council works with these leaders to build trust and encourage people to participate. Others believe this cooperation is only symbolic and not truly meaningful. This theme explores how the involvement of these cultural figures influences people's trust in governance and their willingness to take part in community decisions. For example, a 45-year-old pastor from the Bafaw community mentioned "We were called as church leaders when the council wanted to speak with people about the road repairs. They allowed us to have a conversation with our members and explain the situation. It had an impact. Everyone felt free to ask questions in church. The council, I think, trusted us to communicate the message in our own unique way, with relatable examples and language. It contributed to the development of trust to the council. In that case, I believe they did a good job. so, to me, I will say the council did their best to make everyone included especially reaching out to us the church leaders and some of the chiefs which shows they hold strong respect to our cultures so why not trusting their governance and participate?" This pastor's narrative demonstrates how engaging trusted local authorities, such as church leaders, in communication promotes trust and involvement. By allowing leaders to communicate council goals in familiar language and settings, the council demonstrated respect for local culture, promoting open dialogue and community engagement. This supports Sheikh's (2014) assertion that leaders must understand and collaborate closely with the community to engage in meaningful involvement, as well as Balzer's (2024) belief that communication that reflects cultural awareness fosters trust. The council's approach of engaging cultural figures increased trust and stimulated community participation, which aligned with the study's theory. Furthermore, a 43-year-old female farmer from the Balong community shared "For my village, people di trust na chief dem. If the council di wan for talk anything na for chief dem di first go talk then from there now the chief too go now talk am well-well for ei people them and then council members go then add their own talk. So you seam say if e be only so na so the people go always want for listen anytime wey council get

any update for pass across because the people trust their chiefs even though too the chiefs them too no be perfect somehow and na so council too no be perfect but once as chief talk say make we try for hear dem, people go calm down try listen. That one di hellep fine but if council cam alone without chiefs, fear go be and plenty people no go participate or show face especially now so as di crisis di go on."

Translation: "People in my village have trust in the chiefs. The council must first consult with the chiefs before making any statements. The council members can then add their own message after the chiefs have given their people a thorough explanation. Because they have trust in their chiefs, the people will always be open to hearing what the council has to say if it is conducted in this manner. People will calm down and try to hear what is being said once the chief says we should listen, even though the council and the chiefs are not perfect. This is very beneficial. However, people will be afraid, and many won't participate or even show up if the council arrives alone without consulting the chiefs, especially now that the crisis is still going on." (Translated by the author from pidgin-English to English). This farmer's statement demonstrates that trust in local chiefs is essential for community acceptance of the council's messages. Chiefs serve as trusted intermediaries, preparing people to listen and engage, particularly during a crisis. Without the involvement of chiefs, insecurity and low participation prevail. This emphasises the need of culturally sensitive communication by respected local leaders, reinforcing Sheikh and Balzer's notions that trust, and involvement increase when communication respects community structures and the cultural setting. Also, a 39-year-old male teacher from the Bakweri community mentioned "At meetings I have been to, the chief would simply sit in front as a decoration. He didn't participate in the decision-making process or say anything. This meeting was just for show, nothing serious, that was exactly what people began to say after the meeting. It gave the impression that their leaders and culture were not genuinely valued. The council needs to do more than just invite the chief to sit there if they want people to trust them. From the start, traditional leaders would need to take an active part in the planning and decision-making process." This participant's observation demonstrates that simply having chiefs there without active participation makes people feel as if their culture and leaders are not genuinely honoured. These "show" sessions diminish confidence and participation. This emphasises the importance of true inclusion of traditional leaders in

decision-making, which is consistent with Sheikh and Balzer's ideas that authentic, culturally informed communication is critical for building trust and encouraging community engagement. A 36-year-old female community mobilizer from the Bakossi clan also postulated "I have noticed that depending on how the council interacts with the community, things can change. In one village, the women's leader and the chief collaborated closely with the council. Together, they organized the meeting, and many people attended. They were engaged, they voiced their opinions, offered helpful suggestions, and presented questions. The entire community seemed to be involved. However, in a different village, the council show up alone, without consulting any local authorities and nobody even bothered to show up and this happens especially in times like this when we are still struggling with the crisis in this community. The difference between them was clear because it shows that there is already trust between the public and their local authorities, such as women organizations and chiefs so, the council should work through these trustworthy leaders if they want people to attend, listen, and even participate. In this manner, it becomes simpler to establish positive relationships and engage people in projects." This community mobiliser emphasises how the council's collaboration with trusted local leaders, such as women's leaders and chiefs, results in increased community participation and engagement. Attendance and involvement decrease when the council works alone without engaging local authorities, particularly during a crisis. This demonstrates the need of trust in local leaders for successful communication and project participation, which supports Sheikh and Balzer's emphasis on culturally appropriate, inclusive communication to foster trust and engagement. Moreso, a 30-year-old mechanic from Mbo community shared his opinion "Our chief is not well-respected by the council. He is only consulted when they need people for a meeting. On normal days, they don't come to see how we are doing or to find out what the community needs. People are upset about this. The way the council handles local leaders becomes even more important in situations like this one, when the Anglophone crisis has already caused lots of suffering, worry, and mistrust. The people would support even small projects if they valued our chief and discussed with them on a regular basis. People simply say, it is government trouble again and avoid them when they appear out of nowhere like strangers. Many people don't feel safe or connected to the government because of the crisis, so in my opinion, if the council wants to regain people's trust and engage them, they need to build

deeper connections with our traditional leaders." This mechanic believes that the council's unequal interaction with traditional leaders undermines trust and promotes community dissatisfaction, particularly with the ongoing Anglophone conflict. Consulting leaders only when necessary, without regular communication, makes the council appear detached and dishonest. He believes that by developing deeper, regular relationships with recognised local leaders, the council could increase trust and involvement. This supports Sheikh and Balzer's beliefs that culturally grounded, trust-based communication is critical for community involvement, particularly in conflict-affected settings.

From the responses provided by these diverse participants, it demonstrates that cultural sensitivity in communication, particularly in highly political and diverse environments like Muyuka, is about truly respecting traditional leaders' role in promoting communication that connects with the people rather than merely using them as symbols. According to the theory, this theme supports the notion that genuine trust and involvement are developed through meaningful, inclusive communication that is not only culturally appropriate but also guarantees that local leaders' and community members' opinions are considered during the governance process.

Theme 3: Language Tone in Communication: A Facilitator or a Hindrance to Participation and Trust

In diverse cultural area like Muyuka, particularly with the ongoing Anglophone issue, language and tone of communication have a significant impact on trust and engagement. Participants stated that utilising familiar languages and respectful tones promotes engagement, whereas harsh or imprecise messages in unknown languages foster mistrust and discourage participation. For example, a 43-year-old female farmer from the Balong community expressed in pidgin "we for here so fo understand big English you must first go school learn am but plenty of we no learn big book so when di government people them cam di talk for we for that big-big English e di over hard we for understand wey e no di make sense for wah ears dem. Dem no di even slow down or explain fine for wah own level make we understand wati dem di try talk. For me, if dem fit talk small pidgin e go help we or make dem even find translator if dem no fit talk

we get plenty book pikin dem wey dem fit do wam and na so people fo the community go di like for participate but if na only dat their own way fo talk plenty of we no go fit we for join."

Translation: "Here, you must attend school and learn big English to be able to fully understand it. However, a lot of us failed to complete school, thus making it very difficult for us to understand government officials when they speak to us in formal English. We don't understand what they are saying. They do not even slow down or provide clear, understandable explanations. I think it would be beneficial for us if they could speak a little Pidgin. They can also bring a translator. There are plenty of educated individuals in our community who can do that. In this manner, more community members will want to attend meetings. However, many of us won't be able to join or understand anything if they keep speaking only in their own language" (Translated by the author from pidgin-English to English). This farmer's statement demonstrates how linguistic difficulties limit community engagement. She notes that many residents struggle with formal English and feel excluded when the council uses sophisticated phrases without explanation. She proposes using Pidgin or translators to improve message clarity and inclusivity. This underscores the notion that culturally and linguistically accessible communication, as emphasised by Sheikh and Balzer, is critical for fostering trust and public participation. Moreso, a 55-year-old male traditional authority from Meta community postulated "There are times when council members forget how important it is to speak politely. They do not communicate they just give us instructions. It matters how you speak in our culture. A poorly delivered message will be rejected even if it is good. Council members should be trained in emotional care and humility. at least with this way our people will always find it interesting to participate in their governance and even give them their full trust especially during this crisis period that everyone is afraid even to trust their own friends or neighbours then what more of the council? They really must take all these into consideration." This participant emphasises the importance of respectful and humble communication within their culture. He observes that the council frequently issues instructions rather than engaging in courteous discourse, which leads to rejection even of good ideas. He believes that during a crisis, when trust is fragile, the council must demonstrate emotional care to earn the community's trust and increase involvement. This is consistent with Sheikh and Balzer's views that culturally appropriate and empathic communication is critical to repairing trust and encouraging genuine

engagement. A 22-year-old female student from the Bafut community further shared her opinion "I often observe the council is trying. They attempt to translate messages and use flyers in both French and English. Yet some council members sound aggressive when they speak, particularly in emergency situations. People quit. People will pay more attention if they speak calmly and prove understanding. When you are a government official, it doesn't mean you should be rude the way you talk to normal individuals because no matter how serious or helpful your message might be, the way you communicate it matters." This student recognises the council's efforts to communicate in both French and English, but notes that a harsh tone, particularly in urgent situations, drives people away. She emphasises that courteous and calm communication fosters attention and trust, regardless of the message's significance. Her viewpoint supports Sheikh and Balzer's views that effective involvement is dependent not only on content but also on culturally sensitive and emotionally aware delivery. A 36-year-old female community mobilizer from Bakossi community further gave her opinion "Actually, we can't hold the council entirely responsible. There are officers who really try. They ask locals to help them interpret or explain. They still need to use tone carefully though. I have seen people reject to go to meetings because they felt like they were being talked down to which is not good like in difficult times like this so, Communication must be polite so that the people may feel safe and comfortable at any time." This community mobiliser provides a balanced viewpoint, admitting that some council officers truly endeavour to incorporate communities by requesting assistance with interpretation. However, she emphasises that even with good intentions, a dismissive tone might deter involvement. Especially during times of crisis, polite and respectful communication is critical for making people feel safe and willing to participate. Her observation confirms Sheikh and Balzer's claims that cultural sensitivity and emotional tone are essential for trust and participation in local administration. Moreso, a 41-year-old female widowed petty trader from the Bangwa community argued in pidgin "someday fo here so wey council people dem be cam, dem talk for we like say we be small pikin dem just because say that separatist fighters dem we di call dem say Amba fighters wey na short form for Ambazonia dem be go destroy some government school because the pikin dem be go school for ghost town day wey na every Monday. So, time wey di council officials dem be hear the matter, dem call some of we for attend meeting with them and dat day dem no even address we properly. Dem just di use

dat their vex di talk for we anyhow like say na we be send the boys dem for do dat act wey ei make am some people just vex some one dem even comot go dem wey meeting never finish asehe ma pikin, dat day so fo here no be easy. All this one na for say wati? Na fo show say time wey place no dey fine so people dem too no fit be fine so you need for talk well for person if not plenty people no go take am too easy with you according to wati their culture di teach dem as na place wey people comot for different tribes and dey fit run you even if you wan bring up na fine idea."

Translation: "On a certain day in this community, the council people came here and talk to us as if we are kids because some separatist fighters, who we call Amba fighters, short for Ambazonia, burned down a government school, because children violated the ghost-town law which has been set on Mondays. When the council workers heard about the incident, they held a meeting and some of us were called to attend. But that day, they didn't speak to us with respect, they were just using their anger to address us badly as if we were responsible for the sending of those Amba group to burn down the school. That same day wasn't easy my son. Most people really got angry, and some had to leave when the meeting has not yet ended. Why are my telling you all these? It Is to illustrate that, when a place is not peaceful, the inhabitants too are not okay. So, it is very vital to speak to people with respect because these are people from different tribal groups which some might not take it easy with you the way you talk to them based on what their different culture teaches them, and they might even run away from you even if you come with a significant idea." (Translated by author from pidgin-English to English). This widowed petty trader demonstrates how disrespectful communication during a sensitive moment worsened an already difficult situation. She describes how, in response to a school-burning incident, council officials spoke angrily to the community, as if they were to blame for the act. This produced dissatisfaction, and some attendees walked out of the gathering. Her message emphasises the importance of courteous and culturally aware communication in a diverse and crisis-affected community such as Muyuka. People are emotionally stretched, and when talked to rudely, they may reject even beneficial suggestions. This emphasises the relationship between respectful language and effective community engagement. Further, a 45-year-old male pastor from Bafaw clan added "In times of crisis, the tone of a message is just as important as the message itself. The council needs to understand that people are listening with

their hearts as well as their ears. People will shut you out if you speak forcefully or arrogantly when they are scared or angry. Trust is increased by using a kind and polite tone." The statement emphasises how emotional sensitivity in communicating is crucial during a crisis. The pastor explains that fear and pain make people more emotionally attentive, therefore how something is stated influences whether the message is accepted or rejected. This reflects the study's theory, which emphasises empathy, cultural awareness, and emotional care in interactive communication. Involving the community involves more than just transmitting information, it takes polite and compassionate engagement that creates trust, especially in conflict-affected environments like Muyuka. A 31-year-old female nurse from the Bakundu community shared "During a health outreach program I attended, a council representative spoke quietly and clearly. People shared concerns, listened, and even asked questions. I witnessed that day how tone and language can unite people. Nevertheless, I have also attended meetings where participants left because the speaker was so arrogant and less concerned." This nurse's experience has shown that a calm and clear tone encourages involvement and open communication, whereas arrogance causes individuals to withdraw. This is consistent with the Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance theory, which emphasises the importance of courteous and emotionally aware communication in developing trust and encouraging community participation. When council leaders communicate with humility and clarity, they respect cultural differences and foster an environment in which people feel respected and eager to engage, which is especially crucial in a varied and crisis-affected community.

The responses in this theme make it abundantly evident that communication tone and language have a significant impact on people's ability to trust and engage in local governance, particularly during the Anglophone crisis. Participants are encouraged to participate when officials speak in a courteous, straightforward, and familiar manner. This directly relates to Balzer's (2024) assertion that tone and clarity are important factors in culturally sensitive communication. It also echoes Sheikh's (2014) focus on building trust through grassroots inclusion. In Muyuka, the way a message is conveyed can be just as significant as the words themselves.

Theme 4: Equal Respect for All Cultures: The Exclusion of Internally Displaced Migrants from Participation (IDPs)

Muyuka's cultural diversity has grown because of the Anglophone conflict, which has brought in many internally displaced refugees. While these groups are eager to participate and share their valuable traditions, many feel excluded from council meetings and decisions since they are not perceived as indigenous. This lack of cultural awareness and inclusiveness undermines trust and reduces involvement in local government. For example, a 42-year-old female IDP from Lebialem expressed in pidgin "Di crisis for Southwest-Northwest don make am plenty of we don run leave wa village because of plenty gun shots. Now we don settle na for Muyuka here but di council dem no di ever call we for anything. Ei just be like say na only people wey dem originate fo here dem di ask opinion. But we too di stay for here we need to be as one, we too get cultures and ei matter plenty, we need fo di show am. We get sense, and we wan help."

Translation: "Many of us have fled our villages due to the intense gun explosions during the crisis in the Southwest and Northwest. Even though we now reside in Muyuka, we never receive any calls from the council. People who are originally from here seem to be the only ones asked for their opinions. However, we should all be treated as one since we also reside here. We also have cultures, and our cultures too matters a lot, we must showcase them. We have ideas, and we want to help as well." (Translated by the author from pidgin-English to English). This respondent emphasises the marginalisation experienced by internally displaced people (IDPs) in Muyuka. Despite living in the municipality, they are frequently overlooked by the council during decision-making procedures. The speaker emphasises the need of unity and inclusiveness, noting that IDPs have valuable cultures and ideas to share. This demonstrates a lack of culturally sensitive participatory governance, as articulated from Balzer and Sheikh study, which advocates for equal participation of all cultural groups in local governance with the aim to promote trust, foster belonging, and strengthen community engagement. Furthermore, a 30-year-old female teacher from Balong community, Muyuka pointed out "I can relate to the tension. Some residents fear that if given too much voice, or the opportunity to hold important cultural positions in the Muyuka municipality, outsiders might take over. However, exclusion is not the solution. The council should show that everyone is important. There is no other way to build genuine trust and to encourage people to participate in local

governance. Let their cultures be treated equally and they should be given space to contribute with ideas." Moreso, a 32-year-old male teacher from Hausa community mentioned "To be honest, the council does not possess a lot of resources. To prevent conflict, they first speak with the indigenous groups. But I do agree that since IDPs are now a part of the town, a greater effort should be made to include them. this way, there will be total inclusion and participation. it will even encourage them to develop genuine trust in the governance system." The statement emphasises the conflict between preserving local cultural identity and achieving inclusivity in the Muyuka Municipality. The 30-year-old teacher admits that some indigenous locals are concerned about losing power if internally displaced people (IDPs) or migrant groups obtain more voice or cultural prominence. However, she contends that exclusion is not the answer because it fosters mistrust and limits involvement in local government. Her request for equality for people of all cultures and the development of opportunities to incorporate varied contributions is consistent with the theory of Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance. This idea emphasises the importance of inclusive and culturally respectful governance for effectiveness, particularly in diverse environments. Genuine trust, according to the theory, is formed when all groups, regardless of origin, feel appreciated, heard, and respected. The teacher's point of view emphasises the significance of recognising and integrating all cultural voices to foster unity and increased community participation. A 29-year-old female migrant from the Hausa community expressed "Because of the crisis, many of us have relocated from other parts of the Southwest and Northwest to this area. We are rarely asked to participate in community discussions or decision-making, even though we now live, work, and raise our kids here. We don't talk much, even at council meetings and events. It's not that we have nothing to say, but it feels like no one values or expects us to speak. That silence grows heavily each time. we now just sit and accept whatever thing they offer to us and even take whatever laws and judgements they pass on us with none of our opinions. We develop mistrust because it makes us feel excluded and unwelcome. The council must make room for all voices and cultural practices, not just those who were born here but also those of us who currently call this place home, if it hopes to achieve genuine unity and participation." The 29-year-old female migrant from the Hausa community voiced feelings of exclusion, stating that despite living, working, and raising children in Muyuka, migrants are rarely invited to participate in council meetings or

decisions. This lack of acknowledgement results in quiet, suspicion, and a sensation of being undesired. Her story exemplifies the necessity for culturally sensitive participatory governance, as emphasised by Balzer and Sheikh, who emphasise the significance of involving all cultural groups, both indigenous and migrant in local governance to foster trust, unity, and meaningful involvement. A 30-year-old male mechanic from Mbo expressed "We presently live in Muyuka, where we manage our businesses, pay our taxes, and work to improve our quality of life. However, the council does not consult us when they want to plan a project or discuss an important matter. Even though we make contributions to the community like everyone else, it seems like they continue to treat us as strangers. Such treatment is extremely painful. It gives you the impression that your presence and efforts are minor, making you feel invisible. We want to be seen, heard, and involved because we are now a part of this place and are not merely visitors." The comment of the 30-year-old male mechanic from the Mbo village exemplifies the severe sense of alienation felt by non-indigenous people of Muyuka. Despite making active contributions through job, taxes, and community involvement, they are frequently overlooked in decision-making processes. This exclusion goes against the ideas of Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance, which advocate for inclusive discourse and respect of all cultural groups in a community. His statements emphasise the emotional impact of being considered as an outsider and the council's responsibility to encourage belonging by involving all people, regardless of origin, in participatory government. Moreover, a 45-year-old male council worker from the Balong community expressed "Although we make every effort to include everyone, occasionally the IDPs themselves fail to appear or are too scared to speak. For sanitation meetings, youth talks, and water project planning, we have extended invitations to numerous communities, including displaced groups. However, they frequently skip it, possibly out of fear or a lack of engagement. Although we are trying, the council cannot make people talk. inclusion is a two-way street." The viewpoint provided by the 45-year-old male council worker from the Balong community exemplifies the difficulties that local governments encounter in ensuring full involvement. While the council claims to welcome all groups, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), to meetings and planning activities, many IDPs are said to avoid attending or to be scared to speak up. This highlights a critical aspect in the Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance approach: inclusion is more than just sending out invitations, it is also about

building a safe, courteous, and culturally aware environment in which marginalised groups are encouraged to contribute. His statement emphasises that, while the council is making efforts, effective involvement needs creating confidence and eliminating fear, not simply providing access.

This theme exposes a serious issue: unequal respect for cultures based on origin. It demonstrates how some displaced groups in Muyuka feel excluded from community activities because they are not originally from that area. They feel their views are not taken seriously. One council employee clarified, though, that although every group has been included, not all of them show up or feel comfortable enough to speak. This supports the claims made by Sheikh (2014) and Balzer (2024) that respectful and inclusive communication fosters greater trust and participation. People are disconnected from government without this.

Theme 5: Gender, Culture, and Participation in Local Governance during the Anglophone Crisis

In Muyuka, gender and cultural roles have a significant impact on citizen participation in governance. Traditional customs frequently limit women's voices in societal gatherings, and the Anglophone crisis has added to anxiety and tension, making their participation even more challenging. While some believe that these practices should change to engage women more actively, others say they should be respected. This theme investigates how culturally sensitive communication, particularly around gender, can either strengthen or undermine public trust in local governance, since interviews indicated conflicting perspectives on women's responsibilities and treatment in decision-making settings. For instance, a 36-year-old female community mobilizer from Bakossi shared her opinion "It seems as though women are invisible at every meeting. No one asks us what we think while we sit there. The men always take up the space when I want to talk. They act as though it's not our place or interrupt. However, this crisis also affects us. We raise the kids, manage small businesses, and fetch water. Why are our voices not heard? The council must realize that honouring our culture is different to ignoring us. In our own way, we also want to be heard." This 36-year-old female community mobiliser from Bakossi voiced dissatisfaction with women being marginalised during community meetings. She noted that women frequently sit silently while males dominate discussions, despite the

fact that women are greatly affected by the crisis and have important responsibilities in daily communal life, such as raising children, running businesses, and fetching water. In the view of Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance, this exclusion demonstrates how cultural norms surrounding gender roles could hinder inclusive participation. She emphasised that preserving tradition does not imply disregarding women and urged the council to develop areas where women's perspectives are truly heard and cherished. Furthermore, a 38-year-old male from the Bangwa community postulated "In our culture, women provide support from the back while men take the lead. We were raised in this manner, and it creates order. Although I recognize that people desire change, imposing it will only lead to issues. It will appear false if the council starts assigning women to speak merely to appease outsiders. Rather, they should educate the public, consult the elderly, and allow the change to occur gradually and respectfully. Without culture, change is chaos." this respondent from the Bangwa community stated that traditional gender roles are deeply embedded in their society, with men serving as leaders and women as supporters. He advised against sudden shifts, arguing that any shift in participation standards, such as enhancing women's voices in governance, should be implemented gradually, through community consultation and respect for elders. Using the Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance perspective, he emphasises the significance of linking governance reforms with cultural values. Imposing change without dialogue might end up in resistance or feelings of inadequacy, whereas culturally informed approaches foster trust and long-term inclusion. Moreso, a 22-year-old University female student from the Bafut ethnic community mentioned "This notion that it is normal for women to remain silent It is out of date. We are living through a crisis period. We require every solution and every idea. How can you expect wise decisions if you silence half of the population? We must take all of these into account. The men at the front don't always have the same ideas as some of our mothers. instead of inviting women, the council needs to provide them with real talking space rather than merely a place to sit and listen. Regardless of gender, we are all human." The 22-year-old female participant from the Bafut community questioned established gender roles, pointing out that removing women's opinions restricts crisis solutions. Her stance, based on Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance, emphasises the importance of creating meaningful places for women's engagement, demonstrating that inclusion must go beyond mere presence to actual impact,

regardless of gender. A 55-year-old male traditional authority from Meta expressed "We don't treat women disrespectfully because in our culture, men have their place and women have theirs. We can also see that women are also given good talk. The council does not start involving them. One woman spoke intelligently over all the men at the village hall last month and we now see that if you give everyone a chance regardless of the gender, being it a man or a woman, they will go out and help the community. But we must act properly and without force." This Meta participant accepted cultural biases regarding gender while emphasising the importance of open conversation. His reflection backs up the Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance theory, demonstrating that when inclusion is done respectfully and without pressure, both men and women may make substantial contributions to the growth of the community. A 41-year-old female widowed petty trader from the Bangwa clan further expressed in pidgin "we too women dem we know how fo talk because we be people wey get sense too but for inside most meetings dem so na only man dem di wan control all tin if woman wan talk some man go just di look-look you like say you no get sense for ya head and dey go even laugh you sef for ya back di ask am say na woman too di talk so? All dat kind tin dem so di over discourage we women dem. E di makam we di shame over di think say wah own voice no important. For attend meetings, yes, we di go but e no di make any sense for di go the meetings wey you go just go be wey you no fit talk any tin even when the tin concern we, we no go still talk anything because we don already get dat fear fo wah skin. Some of we so di really get good ideas for wah head but we go just keep am for mind. If the council dem really wan make all we participate, dem get to change how dem di approach we women dem. Make dem di try for make we feel say wah voice matter wey ei be very important especially for dis wah crisis period. Make dem talk with we one-on-one sometimes, give we space fo di express wah mind dem without fear. Even fo wah cultural side, we get power fo wah tradition, so why the council no go fit respect that one?"

Translation: "We women are also able to communicate because we are sensible individuals. However, men are the only ones who want to oversee most meetings. Some men will simply stare at a woman as if she doesn't make sense if she tries to speak like Is that a woman talking? they even ask, laughing behind her back. We women are greatly discouraged by all these things. It makes us feel inferior and ashamed. Yes, we go to the meetings, but what good is it if you can't voice your opinions, even when the matter directly affects us? Since we already

hold fear, we won't speak. Some of us hold brilliant ideas, but we choose to keep them to ourselves. The council needs to change how they treat us women if they genuinely want everyone to take part. They ought to try to convey to us that, particularly in this crisis, our opinions are valued and significant. They need to have one-on-one conversations with us occasionally and provide an environment where we can express our opinions without fear. Why can't the council acknowledge that women hold power as it is in our culture?" (Translated by the author from pidgin-English to English). This female petty trader from the Bangwa clan described how fear, mockery, and male domination in meetings prevent women from speaking out, even when the issues relate directly to them. Her narrative supports the Culturally Sensitive Participatory Governance theory by demonstrating that, to achieve meaningful inclusion, municipalities must build safe, respectful environments in which women feel their opinions are heard, particularly during crisis situations.

This theme highlights the strong cultural ties to gender roles in Muyuka and how they influence who is comfortable speaking up or taking part. Some people, including some leaders, are starting to see the benefits of gradually and respectfully altering the traditional roles that restrict women's voices, even though some people still support them. In communication, cultural sensitivity entails acknowledging these gendered norms and establishing safe spaces for all voices, particularly those that have historically been marginalized. Real participation, according to Sheikh (2014), occurs when people experience respect and visibility that aligns with their social realities. According to Balzer (2024), being sensitive means navigating culture sensibly rather than avoiding it. Only when communication involves the silent half of the population, can trust and participation in Muyuka's crisis increase.

DISCUSSION

In conflict-affected and culturally diverse environments, the integration of governance, communication, and culture is not just a strategic thought, but also a necessary condition for legitimacy and inclusivity. This study investigated the relationship between cultural sensitivity in communication and its influence on public trust and engagement in local governance in Muyuka Municipality, Cameroon. The findings paint a complex picture of a landscape in which community members praise and criticise local authorities' communication efforts during a difficult political climate. In this chapter, the study critically engages with these findings and investigates how culturally responsive participatory governance is implemented. Drawing on both supportive and critical participant viewpoints, as well as selected scholarly sources, the discussion offers a thorough examination of the strengths, limitations, and consequences of methods of communication in the council's governance approach.

Cultural Sensitivity and the Sense of Inclusion

This research shows that cultural sensitivity is more than just a communication style, it is a strategic and ethical requirement for trust-building and inclusive governance. In Muyuka, many participants perceived council communication as distant, formal, and linguistically disconnected. This is especially noticeable in the application of French and unnecessarily formal vocabulary, which fails to engage citizens emotionally. Based on the theory, Balzer's (2024) study takes the lead here. she emphasises that for communication to be effective in post-conflict or multicultural situations, it must resonate emotionally and represent the values and identity of those with whom it aims to engage. Cultural sensitivity, she believes, is not a luxury, but rather the foundation for developing emotional trust. Residents recognised this lack of cultural foundation as a continuation of the historical marginalisation they had experienced during the Anglophone issue. Community members stated that they expected communication in familiar formats, such as face-to-face conversations conducted by chiefs, elders, or community leaders who understand and embody the cultural tone of conversation. Balzer (2024) describes this "symbolic familiarity," the employment of messengers, language, and techniques that emotionally resonate with people's lived situations. Without this consistency, even well-meaning communications are disregarded or viewed sceptically. However,

resistance stems not only from current acts, but also from deeply rooted frustrations. This means that trust must be re-established not only through improved communication techniques, but also through consistent and relational presence. Sheikh's (2014) study supports this by claiming that decentralisation only promotes involvement when combined with social recognition and emotional presence. In Muyuka, this implies that the council's focus should move from information delivery to relationship-building, with each communication serving as an opportunity for healing and reconnecting.

Displacement, Marginalisation, and Hidden Voices

Displacement driven by the Anglophone crisis has contributed to the exclusion of previously marginalised populations. Women, ethnic minorities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are among the groups that experience social and societal invisibility. According to Bobel et al. (2022), true inclusion occurs when institutions plan communication with these groups in mind from the start. The findings revealed that such groups are frequently ignorant of meetings, discussions, or development possibilities because methods of communication are not tailored to their actual situation or cultural reality. From a viewpoint of the theory, Sheikh (2014) says that participatory governance must actively reach out to those on the margins and provide flexible, localised interaction platforms. This means that simply inviting the public in general is insufficient. communication must be specifically tailored to reach individuals who are generally excluded. In Muyuka, this would entail mobile outreach to displaced camps, bilingual formats for ethnically different groups, and culturally suitable strategies for integrating women. The invisibility of these voices reveals a larger problem in local governance, the idea that participation naturally occurs once a meeting is held. This study demonstrates the opposite. when cultural barriers and trauma are not addressed, participation becomes an entitlement rather than a right. Using Balzer's (2024) lens, it was recognised that inclusion must be emotionally safe, linguistically acceptable, and culturally sensitive. Anything less, and communication becomes a symbol of exclusion, rather than empowerment.

Recognising Council Barriers: A Balanced Perspective

The council's limited capability and difficult challenges are two issues that are often ignored during the communication process. While this research has identified various flaws in how the

council interacts with the public, it is also critical to understand the context in which local authorities function. During the focus group discussions, several local staff members expressed that they sincerely want to involve residents but are hampered by reasons outside them. These include inadequate infrastructure, fear created by the ongoing Anglophone crisis, a lack of staff training in engaged methodologies, and insufficient resources to reach isolated areas. In certain situations, the council's inability to speak local languages further restricts meaningful communication. Srividya (2024) stresses that cultural sensitivity should be applied not only to communities but also to institutions under tension. The council's inability to meet expectations is generally due to fatigue and a lack of support, rather than lack of interest. However, if these internal impediments are not addressed, the public's dissatisfaction and mistrust will deepen. However, even in challenging circumstances, how the council communicates is still important. People are more willing to tolerate shortages of resources than to ignore arrogance or emotional detachment. From the theory according to Balzer (2024), building emotional trust requires humility, empathy, and evident effort, rather than simply being present. When the council's messages are rushed, inappropriately formal, or detached from community reality, they come across as impersonal, even when the intentions are genuine. This is why Sheikh's (2014) study emphasises shared responsibility. Governance should be collaborative. The council must be open about the problems it faces and engage the community in problem-solving. Working with local churches, community radio, and youth groups, for example, can help to increase communication without risking significant costs. Communities must be willing to move beyond scepticism and engage when transparency is demonstrated. Rebuilding communication requires a transition from blame to cooperation, in which both parties admit limitations while committing to progress.

Traditional Leaders and Conflict Resolution

Traditional leaders play a unique and prominent position in the Muyuka society, serving not just as cultural guardians but also as mediators between the people and local government. Their legitimacy is founded on community trust, historical continuity, and the ability to arbitrate social and political crises. Participants in the study continually identified traditional authority as the primary point of contact during community mobilisation and development operations. This is consistent with Kowalski (2023), who defines cultural legitimacy as the authority that

stems from being rooted in a community's values and traditions. Messages provided by chiefs or elders have greater emotional and moral weight than those issued by unfamiliar council staff. However, this dynamic comes with complexity. While some traditional leaders are seen as supportive and inclusive, others are condemned for being politically corrupt, absent, or excluded from their people's struggles. This diversity has resulted in conflicting opinions about their value in development communication. Sheikh (2014) emphasises the importance of not only localizing power but also holding it responsible. A participatory Approach requires traditional leaders to reflect the entire diversity of their communities, not simply elite views or political allies. Where traditional systems are inclusive, they promote participatory government. However, when they exclude women, youth, or minority groups, they could worsen marginalisation. The analysis suggests developing structured dialogue forums where council representatives and traditional leaders can meet on a regular basis to align goals, examine community responses, and resolve problems. This could also help to align traditional and council messages, preventing duplication or contradiction. Balzer (2024) claims that when cultural leaders are incorporated with care and clarity, they can be strong agents of reconciliation, engagement, and peacebuilding.

Gender and Cultural Communication

Gender exclusion was identified as one of Muyuka's most persistent communication impediments. While women are frequently present at public council sessions, their participation is usually symbolic rather than meaningful. Many female participants in the study stated that they did not feel confident to speak up during such events for fear of being ridiculed or facing cultural retaliation. This anxiety is not unjustified, as traditional standards continue to assign women a less active role in public life. According to Ribeiro and Silva (2021), gender norms are strongly embedded in cultural systems, limiting the visibility of women and influence in public decision-making. Furthermore, from the focused group discussion, it revealed that, women are silenced not only by men but also by other women who discourage deviating from established norms. Balzer (2024) emphasises the importance of emotionally safe communication, particularly among historically marginalised communities. If women are afraid of being judged or punished for speaking out, no amount of structural inclusion will make their involvement worthwhile. The atmosphere should encourage rather than discourage

expression. The council considers women's inclusion to be vital, but real action is limited. While several leaders indicated a wish to empower women, they admitted to a lack of concrete plans for doing so. This causes a disconnect between awareness and action. Sheikh's (2014) framework emphasises the significance of removing internal hierarchies, particularly those based on gender, to promote equal involvement. Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) suggest that successful participatory communication requires the design of processes that reflect all voices in the community, particularly those that are traditionally silenced. This requires councils to shift from passive inclusion to active empowerment. Gender-specific forums, female-led debates, and strong connections with women's organisations can all help women gain the confidence and tools they need to engage equally. Communication must guarantee that everyone at the table can speak, be heard, and impact decisions.

Theoretical Reflection: Applying Sheikh and Balzer

Combining Sheikh's (2014) participatory communication model and Balzer's (2024) emphasis on emotional and cultural differences, this study of Muyuka's local governance during the Anglophone crisis indicates both improvement and ongoing obstacles. Efforts to involve the community, such as bringing in traditional and religious leaders and adopting local languages, reflect Sheikh's beliefs and have helped some inhabitants feel included. However, marginalised groups, particularly displaced people and women, frequently feel that their voices are ignored, implying that participation can be more symbolic than meaningful. Balzer's emphasise on the emotional and cultural aspects of communication is obvious in people' reactions. when officials speak with warmth and cultural sensitivity, trust and involvement rise. conversely, impersonal or harsh tones trigger feelings of alienation. Thus, in conflict-affected areas like Muyuka, efficient governance communication must be both engaging and culturally sensitive to re-establish trust and encourage true inclusion.

Limitations to the Study

While this study sheds light on culturally sensitive communication and participatory governance in Muyuka Municipality, certain limitations should be noted. First, the study included a small number of participants, primarily from chosen Muyuka settlements. This small sample may not adequately represent the diversity of experiences within the

municipality, particularly among more isolated or marginalised neighbourhoods. Second, due to security concerns and the ongoing scenario, all interviews and focus group discussions took place online. While this method provided for safer data gathering, it may have hindered participants' willingness or reduced the depth of interaction compared to face-to-face encounters. Furthermore, technological constraints such as poor internet connectivity or a lack of access to devices may have excluded some voices, particularly from relocated or low-income groups. These factors may have altered the data's richness and inclusion. Third, the study relied mostly on qualitative approaches, which add depth and context but limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research could benefit from using quantitative methods to supplement qualitative findings and improve the evidence base. Finally, cultural sensitivity and participation are multifaceted notions that evolve throughout time. This study provides an image of a single era of crisis; thus, the findings may not reflect more broadly trends or changes that develop as the political and social situation progresses. Regardless of these constraints, the study adds significant knowledge regarding the problems and opportunities for participatory communication in conflict-affected, culturally diverse contexts such as Muyuka.

Importance to the Study

This study is significant because it highlights how local governments may either develop or erode public trust through their communication strategies, particularly during times of crisis. In Muyuka, the Anglophone struggle has not only produced fear and displacement, but it has also eroded the people's relationship with the council. According to this study, restoring that relationship requires culturally aware, emotionally sensitive, and inclusive communication. It emphasises that people want more than just knowledge. They want to feel appreciated, involved, and understood. The study, which focusses on how cultural practices, local languages, and community leaders shape communication, is valuable for councils, non-governmental organisations, and policymakers operating in crisis zones. It also provides useful insights for researchers studying governance, community trust, and inclusive development. Overall, the study provides value by demonstrating that when communication respects people's identities and experiences, it may be a powerful instrument for healing, engagement, and advancement. This research is significant because it demonstrates the importance of thorough cultural understanding and polite communication in establishing trust between

communities and local authorities, particularly during times of conflict. In a crisis like Muyuka, where people feel harmed, intimidated, or overlooked, the way the government communicates with them may either heal or divide. This research emphasises the need of councils speaking in ways that represent the culture of individuals, identity, and feelings, rather than simply sharing information. It also serves as a reminder to scholars and policymakers that true engagement entails not only inviting people, but also ensuring their safety, respect, and inclusion at all stages of the process.

CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

This study found that in a culturally diverse and conflict-affected area like Muyuka, communication is much more than just giving facts. It is an important component of how people interpret their place in society, how they interact with leaders, and how much they believe their opinions matter in decision-making. Communication in communities influenced by crisis, history, and different identities takes on emotional, symbolic, and political dimensions. People make decisions about whether to trust, engage, or withdraw based on everyday words, tones, and messages. This study shows that culturally aware and emotionally respectful communication can help lessen feelings of exclusion and repair damaged relationships. It is more than just language use, it is about how communication addresses people's lived experiences, memories, and values. The Anglophone crisis has intensified these difficulties. It has undermined citizens' connections with their leaders, instilling fear, frustration, and uncertainty. People in this situation want more than just information, they want to be included, heard, and treated with respect. They want communication that reflects who they are and where they are from. This research demonstrates that culturally sensitive and emotionally aware communication is essential for repairing trust and moving forward. The findings revealed that communication based on local traditions, such as engaging community leaders, translating messages into common languages, or integrating storytelling, can foster engagement and trust. However, when it is top-down, excessively formal, or removed from people's lives, it promotes feelings of isolation and exclusion. This was particularly evident among displaced persons, women, and minority groups, who frequently felt invisible in public debates. In such circumstances, communication fails not only due to poor delivery, but also because people are not made to feel seen, heard, or valued. These disparities demonstrate that inclusion is about more than just who is invited into a room, it is also about how they participate while inside. Through the words of community members and research driven by strong theory, the study exposes both progress and gaps that persist. It appreciates the Muyuka Council's initiatives while also emphasising the need for more comprehensive, inclusive procedures. It emphasises how genuine engagement cannot be forced or exaggerated. It must stem from respect, care, and understanding. Ultimately, this research provides more than just findings. It conveys the idea how every word spoken between the government and the people contains the

potential to split or unite, harm or heal. The future of governance in conflict-affected areas such as Muyuka is determined not only by structures and decisions, but also by how leaders communicate, how communities feel, and how communication is used to build bridges rather than barriers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Participants Profile Table

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Cultural Group	Status/Role
P1	Female	25	Balong	Farmer
P2	Female	40	Bakweri	Traditional Leader
P3	Male	32	Hausa (Migrant)	Teacher
P4	Male	45	Balong	Council Worker
P5	Female	30	Ngemba	Nurse
P6	Male	38	Bangwa	Chief
P7	Male	21	Oroko	University Student
P8	Male	45	Bafaw	Pastor
P9	Female	43	Balong	Farmer
P10	Male	39	Bakweri	Teacher
P11	Female	36	Bakossi	Community Mobilizer
P12	Male	30	Mbo	Mechanic
P13	Male	55	Meta	Traditional Authority
P14	Female	22	Bafut	University Student
P15	Female	41	Bangwa	Widowed Petty Trader
P16	Female	42	Lebialem (IDP)	Displaced Trader
P17	Female	30	Balong	Teacher
P18	Male	32	Hausa	Teacher
P19	Female	29	Hausa (IDP)	Migrant Worker
P20	Male	30	Bakundu	Outreach Nurse

APPENDIX 2: Interview Questions

The following 15 open-ended questions guided both the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These questions were thoughtfully crafted to investigate how community people perceive and respond to council communication in the context of the Anglophone crisis, a dispute that has impacted cultural trust, governance, and societal integration in Muyuka Municipality.

1. Do you feel more involved or isolated in local decision-making since the Anglophone crisis started? Kindly explain.

2. Was your cultural identity or language considered in council communication throughout the crisis, or was it overlooked?

3. How have council messages in the crisis made you feel valued or disrespected?

4. How does the emotional tone of communication from council officials influence your sentiments of trust or fear during this conflict?

5. How does the emotional tone of communication from council officials influence your sentiments of trust or fear during this conflict?

6. Could you give an example of a time during the crisis when the council's communication made you feel connected or ignored?

7. Do you trust council communications more when they are presented by chiefs, pastors, or elders, particularly in this conflict issue? Why, or why not?

8. How do traditional or religious leaders assist you understand or trust council messages amid the crisis?

9. Have you or others in your community avoided council meetings because of how communication was handled?

10. In your opinion, how has the Anglophone issue influenced how the council communicates with or engages with the community?

11. Do you believe that women and adolescents have a legitimate voice in communication and decision-making?

12. As a displaced person or member of a minority group (if applicable), do you feel excluded or unheard because of the crisis?

13. What changes would you like to see in how the council communicates with the public, especially given the current crisis?

14. Which language, tone, or communication approaches make you feel safe or most trustworthy?

15. If you could advise the council on how to develop trust through communication during this situation, what would you say?

APPENDIX 3: Theme 1-Cultural Sensitivity in Communication during the Anglophone Crisis

Participants Involved in Theme 1

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Cultural Group	Status/Role
P1	Female	25	Balong	Farmer
P2	Female	40	Bakweri	Traditional Leader
P3	Male	32	Hausa (Migrant)	Teacher
P4	Male	45	Balong	Council Worker
P5	Female	30	Ngemba	Nurse
P6	Male	38	Bangwa	Chief
P7	Male	21	Oroko	University Student

Participants Responses

P1 (25-year-old female farmer from Balong community- Translated):

"People have been terrified of the government ever since the Anglophone issue began here. However, you must first comprehend how we operate if you wish to communicate with us. You, like the government, come and talk to us only in French, which makes it impossible for us to understand you if we speak Pidgin or our native tongue. How do they think we will comprehend? Additionally, people in my hometown won't take you seriously if you don't go through the chief or the quarter-head because that is how we do things in our culture, and the government needs

to honour that. However, the council does not always adhere to this procedure, which annoys some people and makes them resistant"

P2 (40-year-old female traditional leader from Bakweri community):

"Sometimes the issue is not what is being said, but rather who is saying it and how. People are traumatized during crisis, and many would rather listen to those they can trust. The council mostly overlooks the fact that in our culture, messages must first go through certain people, like the women's leaders, elders, and chiefs. It becomes so disrespectful to skip these steps. They don't always listen to the advice that some of us have tried to give them. Particularly in the present, this is not how trust is being done."

P3 (32-year-old male teacher from Hausa migrant community):

"Although I can appreciate the pressure the council is under in hard times like this, they must also recognize the many kinds of cultures present in Muyuka. Not everyone can be reached with the same message or tone. When you involve cultural leaders and speak calmly, some people respond better. Others seek examples that are concrete in their native tongue. Being culturally sensitive requires adapting to the situation. However, the council's communication is currently too formal and disconnected from our realities, making many people feel excluded."

P4 (45-year-old male council worker from Balong community):

"We have worked hard to adjust to the local communities. We do not disregard culture. We have collaborated closely with community groups and chiefs on numerous projects involving outreach but, we are also limited because we are unable to speak all the local tongues and occasionally, we are unable to spend enough time in each village due to security concerns. I think we are doing our best to show respect. Even when we arrive with the best of intentions, some people are simply too suspicious due to the crisis."

P5 (30-year-old female nurse from Ngemba community, Northwest region- Translated):

Many trusts have been destroyed by the crisis. Therefore, how council members speak to us now matters a lot when they visit our area. Our people will abandon them as well if they give the impression that they don't care about our way of life. Patients want to be respected, not just

given medication, even in the hospital. Therefore, rather than merely using fancy words on paper, the local government must demonstrate genuine cultural respect if they want people to

P6 (38-year-old male chief from Bangwa community):

"To be honest, some council workers are making efforts, but others showed up with pride. They talk and act like they are experts. In our culture, you don't talk to elders like that. People are now more aware and mindful of tone and respect because of the crisis. You must get out of your high position and walk among the people if you want to earn their trust right now. Speak their language, sit with them, and feel their suffering."

P7 (21-year-old male university student from Oroko community):

"In my own opinion, the council has tried to get in touch with us, particularly during this crisis. Everyone is feeling nervous, so it's difficult for them as well. However, I have seen them attempting to communicate in a more polite manner, especially during community events and working together with our chiefs. Also, they invited young leaders, which, in my opinion, shows their efforts to be culturally prepared. At least they are not ignoring us, even though they are not perfect. Although I believe the council is now trying to listen and include more voices, some of my friends still believe the government doesn't care enough but to me they are trying especially in these difficult times."

APPENDIX 4: Theme 2- The Role of Religious and Traditional Leaders in facilitating   Culturally Sensitive Communication

Participants Involved in Theme 2

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Cultural Group	Status/Role
P8	Male	45	Bafaw	Pastor
P9	Female	43	Balong	Farmer
P10	Male	39	Bakweri	Teacher
P11	Female	36	Bakossi	Community Mobilizer

P12	Male	30	Mbo	Mechanic

Participants Responses

P8 (45-year-old male pastor from Bafaw community):

"We were called as church leaders when the council wanted to speak with people about the road repairs. They allowed us to have a conversation with our members and explain the situation. It had an impact. Everyone felt free to ask questions in church. The council, I think, trusted us to communicate the message in our own unique way, with relatable examples and language. It contributed to the development of trust to the council. In that case, I believe they did a good job. So, to me, I will say the council did their best to make everyone included especially reaching out to us the church leaders and some of the chiefs which shows they hold strong respect to our cultures so why not trusting their governance and participate?"

P9 (43-year-old female farmer from Balong Community-Translated):

"People in my village have trust in the chiefs. The council must first consult with the chiefs before making any statements. The council members can then add their own message after the chiefs have given their people a thorough explanation. Because they have trust in their chiefs, the people will always be open to hearing what the council has to say if it is conducted in this manner. People will calm down and try to hear what is being said once the chief says we should listen, even though the council and the chiefs are not perfect. This is very beneficial. However, people will be afraid, and many won't participate or even show up if the council arrives alone without consulting the chiefs, especially now that the crisis is still going on."

P10 (39-year-old male teacher from Bakweri community):

"At meetings I have been to, the chief would simply sit in front as a decoration. He didn't participate in the decision-making process or say anything. This meeting was just for show, nothing serious, that was exactly what people began to say after the meeting. It gave the impression that their leaders and culture were not genuinely valued. The council needs to do more than just invite the chief to sit there if they want people to trust them. From the start,

traditional leaders would need to take an active part in the planning and decision-making process. The community pays attention to their knowledge and experience. When the council neglects that, it appears to be that they just took advantage of the chief's attendance to enhance the meeting's appearance rather than because they respect his position. Listening to the chief's advice, including him in conversations, and demonstrating that his opinion counts are each aspect of true inclusion. People will feel valued and be more willing to participate in council activities only then."

P11 (36-year-old female community mobilizer from Bakossi clan):

"I have noticed that depending on how the council interacts with the community, things can change. In one village, the women's leader and the chief collaborated closely with the council. Together, they organized the meeting, and many people attended. They were engaged, they voiced their opinions, offered helpful suggestions, and presented questions. The entire community seemed to be involved. However, in a different village, the council show up alone, without consulting any local authorities and nobody even bothered to show up and this happens especially in times like this when we are still struggling with the crisis in this community. The difference between them was clear because it shows that there is already trust between the public and their local authorities, such as women organizations and chiefs so, the council should work through these trustworthy leaders if they want people to attend, listen, and even participate. In this manner, it becomes simpler to establish positive relationships and engage people in projects."

P12 (30-year-old male mechanic from Mbo community):

"Our chief is not well-respected by the council. He is only consulted when they need people for a meeting. On normal days, they don't come to see how we are doing or to find out what the community needs. People are upset about this. The way the council handles local leaders becomes even more important in situations like this one, when the Anglophone crisis has already caused lots of suffering, worry, and mistrust. The people would support even small projects if they valued our chief and discussed with them on a regular basis. People simply say, it is government trouble again and avoid them when they appear out of nowhere like strangers. Many people don't feel safe or connected to the government because of the crisis, so in my

opinion, if the council wants to regain people's trust and engage them, they need to build deeper connections with our traditional leaders."

APPENDIX 5: Theme 3- Language Tone in Communication: A Facilitator or a Hindrance to Participation and Trust

Participants Involved in Theme 3

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Cultural Group	Status/Role
P9	Female	43	Balong	Farmer
P13	Male	55	Meta	Traditional Authority
P14	Female	22	Bafut	University Student
P11	Female	36	Bakossi	Community Mobilizer
P15	Female	41	Bangwa	Widowed Petty Trader
P8	Male	45	Bafaw	Pastor
P20	Female	31	Bakundu	Nurse (Outreach)

Participants Responses

P9 (43-year-old female farmer from Balong community- Translated):

"Here, you must attend school and learn big English to be able to fully understand it. However, a lot of us failed to complete school, thus making it very difficult for us to understand government officials when they speak to us in formal English. We don't understand what they are saying. They do not even slow down or provide clear, understandable explanations. I think it would be beneficial for us if they could speak a little Pidgin. They can also bring a translator. There are plenty of educated individuals in our community who can do that. In this manner, more community members will want to attend meetings. However, many of us won't be able to join or understand anything if they keep speaking only in their own language."

P13 (55-year-old male traditional authority from Meta community):

"There are times when council members forget how important it is to speak politely. They do not communicate. They just give us instructions. It matters how you speak in our culture. A

poorly delivered message will be rejected even if it is good. Council members should be trained in emotional care and humility. At least with this way our people will always find it interesting to participate in their governance and even give them their full trust especially during this crisis period that everyone is afraid even to trust their own friends or neighbours then what more of the council? They really must take all these into consideration."

P14 (22-year-old female university student from Bafut community):

"I often observe the council is trying. They attempt to translate messages and use flyers in both French and English. Yet some council members sound aggressive when they speak, particularly in emergency situations. People quit. People will pay more attention if they speak calmly and prove understanding. When you are a government official, it doesn't mean you should be rude the way you talk to normal individuals because no matter how serious or helpful your message might be, the way you communicate it matters."

P11 (36-year-old female community mobilizer from Bakossi community):

"Actually, we can't hold the council entirely responsible. There are officers who really try. They ask locals to help them interpret or explain. They still need to use tone carefully though. I have seen people reject to go to meetings because they felt like they were being talked down to which is not good like in difficult times like this so, communication must be polite so that the people may feel safe and comfortable at any time."

P15 (41-year-old female widowed petty trader from Bangwa community- Translated):

"On a certain day in this community, the council people came here and talked to us as if we are kids because some separatist fighters, who we call Amba fighters, short for Ambazonia, burned down a government school, because children violated the ghost-town law which has been set on Mondays. When the council workers heard about the incident, they held a meeting and some of us were called to attend. But that day, they didn't speak to us with respect, they were just using their anger to address us badly as if we were responsible for the sending of those Amba group to burn down the school. That same day wasn't easy my son. Most people really got angry, and some had to leave when the meeting had not yet ended. Why am I telling you all these? It is to illustrate that, when a place is not peaceful, the inhabitants too are not okay. So, it is very

vital to speak to people with respect because these are people from different tribal groups which some might not take it easy with you the way you talk to them based on what their different culture teaches them, and they might even run away from you even if you come with a significant idea."

P8 (45-year-old male pastor from Bafaw community):

"In times of crisis, the tone of a message is just as important as the message itself. The council needs to understand that people are listening with their hearts as well as their ears. People will shut you out if you speak forcefully or arrogantly when they are scared or angry. Trust is increased by using a kind and polite tone."

P20 (31-year-old female nurse from Bakundu community):

"During a health outreach program I attended, a council representative spoke quietly and clearly. People shared concerns, listened, and even asked questions. I witnessed that day how tone and language can unite people. Nevertheless, I have also attended meetings where participants left because the speaker was so arrogant and less concerned."

APPENDIX 6: Theme 4- Equal Respect for All Cultures: The Exclusion of Internally Displaced Migrants from Participation (IDPs)

Participants Involved in Theme 4

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Cultural Group	Status/Role
P16	Female	42	Lebialem (IDP)	Displaced Trader
P17	Female	30	Balong	Teacher
P18	Male	32	Hausa (Migrant)	Teacher
P19	Female	29	Hausa (IDP)	Migrant Worker
P12	Male	30	Mbo	Mechanic
P4	Male	45	Balong	Council Worker

Participants Responses

P16 (42-year-old female IDP from Lebialem- Translated):

"Many of us have fled our villages due to the intense gun explosions during the crisis in the Southwest and Northwest. Even though we now reside in Muyuka, we never receive any calls from the council. People who are originally from here seem to be the only ones asked for their opinions. However, we should all be treated as one since we also reside here. We also have cultures, and our cultures too matter a lot, we must showcase them. We have ideas, and we want to help as well."

P17 (30-year-old female teacher from Balong community):

"I can relate to the tension. Some residents fear that if given too much voice, or the opportunity to hold important cultural positions in the Muyuka municipality, outsiders might take over. However, exclusion is not the solution. The council should show that everyone is important. There is no other way to build genuine trust and to encourage people to participate in local governance. Let their cultures be treated equally and they should be given space to contribute with ideas."

P18 (32-year-old male teacher from Hausa community):

"To be honest, the council does not possess a lot of resources. To prevent conflict, they first speak with the indigenous groups. But I do agree that since IDPs are now a part of the town, a greater effort should be made to include them. This way, there will be total inclusion and participation. It will even encourage them to develop genuine trust in the governance system."

P19 (29-year-old female migrant worker from Hausa IDP community):

"Because of the crisis, many of us have relocated from other parts of the Southwest and Northwest to this area. We are rarely asked to participate in community discussions or decision-making, even though we now live, work, and raise our kids here. We don't talk much, even at council meetings and events. It's not that we have nothing to say, but it feels like no one values or expects us to speak. That silence grows heavily each time. We now just sit and accept whatever thing they offer to us and even take whatever laws and judgements they pass on us

with none of our opinions. We develop mistrust because it makes us feel excluded and unwelcome. The council must make room for all voices and cultural practices, not just those who were born here but also those of us who currently call this place home, if it hopes to achieve genuine unity and participation."

P12 (30-year-old male mechanic from Mbo community):

"We presently live in Muyuka, where we manage our businesses, pay our taxes, and work to improve our quality of life. However, the council does not consult us when they want to plan a project or discuss an important matter. Even though we make contributions to the community like everyone else, it seems like they continue to treat us as strangers. Such treatment is extremely painful. It gives you the impression that your presence and efforts are minor, making you feel invisible. We want to be seen, heard, and involved because we are now a part of this place and are not merely visitors."

P4 (45-year-old male council worker from Balong community):

"Although we make every effort to include everyone, occasionally the IDPs themselves fail to appear or are too scared to speak. For sanitation meetings, youth talks, and water project planning, we have extended invitations to numerous communities, including displaced groups. However, they frequently skip it, possibly out of fear or a lack of engagement. Although we are trying, the council cannot make people talk. Inclusion is a two-way street."

APPENDIX 7: Theme 5- Gender, Culture, and Participation in Local Governance during the Anglophone Crisis

Participants Involved in Theme 5

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Cultural Group	Status/Role
P11	Female	36	Bakossi	Community Mobilizer
P6	Male	38	Bangwa	Chief
P14	Female	22	Bafut	University Student
P13	Male	55	Meta	Traditional Authority
P15	Female	41	Bangwa	Widowed Petty Trader

Participants Responses

P11 (36-year-old female community mobilizer from Bakossi clan):

"It seems as though women are invisible at every meeting. No one asks us what we think while we sit there. The men always take up the space when I want to talk. They act as though it's not our place or interrupt. However, this crisis also affects us. We raise the kids, manage small businesses, and fetch water. Why are our voices not heard? The council must realize that honouring our culture is different to ignoring us. In our own way, we also want to be heard."

P6 (38-year-old male chief from Bangwa community):

"In our culture, women provide support from the back while men take the lead. We were raised in this manner, and it creates order. Although I recognize that people desire change, imposing it will only lead to issues. It will appear false if the council starts assigning women to speak merely to appease outsiders. Rather, they should educate the public, consult the elderly, and allow the change to occur gradually and respectfully. Without culture, change is chaos."

P14 (22-year-old female university student from Bafut ethnic group):

"This notion that it is normal for women to remain silent is out of date. We are living through a crisis period. We require every solution and every idea. How can you expect wise decisions if you silence half of the population? We must take all of these into account. The men at the front don't always have the same ideas as some of our mothers. Instead of inviting women, the council needs to provide them with real talking space rather than merely a place to sit and listen. Regardless of gender, we are all human."

P13 (55-year-old male traditional authority from Meta community):

"We don't treat women disrespectfully because in our culture, men have their place and women have theirs. We can also see that women are also given good talk. The council does not start involving them. One woman spoke intelligently over all the men at the village hall last month and we now see that if you give everyone a chance regardless of the gender, being it a man or a woman, they will go out and help the community. But we must act properly and without force."

P15 (41-year-old female widowed petty trader from Bangwa clan- Translated):

"We women are also able to communicate because we are sensible individuals. However, men are the only ones who want to oversee most meetings. Some men will simply stare at a woman as if she doesn't make sense if she tries to speak, like 'Is that a woman talking?' they even ask, laughing behind her back. We women are greatly discouraged by all these things. It makes us feel inferior and ashamed. Yes, we go to the meetings, but what good is it if you can't voice your opinions, even when the matter directly affects us? Since we already hold fear, we won't speak. Some of us hold brilliant ideas, but we choose to keep them to ourselves. The council needs to change how they treat us women if they genuinely want everyone to take part. They ought to try to convey to us that, particularly in this crisis, our opinions are valued and significant. They need to have one-on-one conversations with us occasionally and provide an environment where we can express our opinions without fear. Why can't the council acknowledge that women hold power as it is in our culture?"