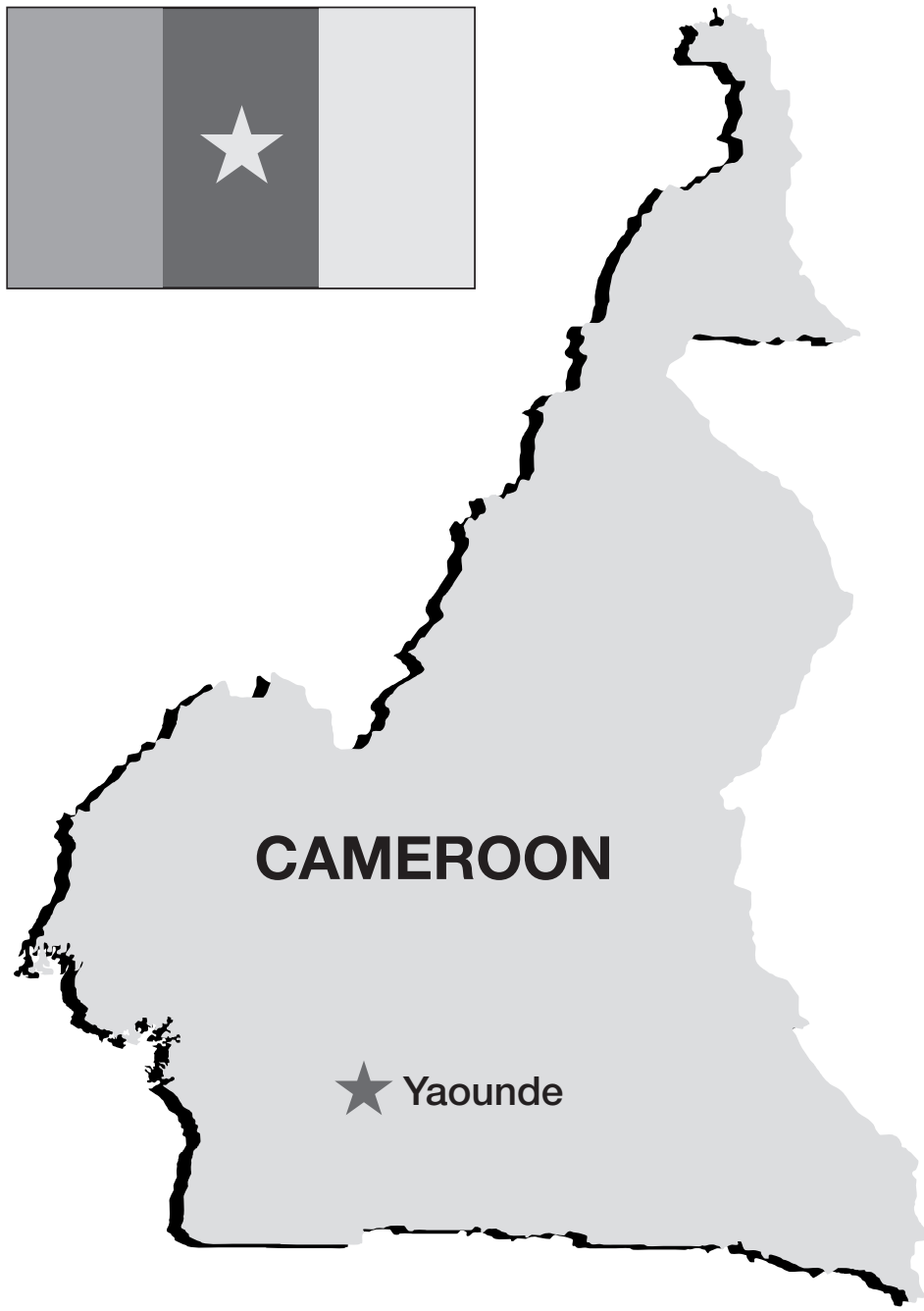
WLG 604

West Virginia University
EXTENSION SERVICE

Welcome to Cameroon

Line-Audrey Nkule Sonkeng, 2016-2017 International Student and Denis Scott, WVU Extension Specialist

How na (Hello): Pidgin English



About Me

Line-Audrey Nkule Sonkeng

My legal name is Nkule Sonkeng Line-Audrey Maeva. Nkule Sonkeng represents my last names while Line-Audrey Maeva represents my first and middle names. Nkule means "the call of the drum." The drum was used to gather the village for communication and problem solving. It is also a great musical instrument, which explains why my family jokes that we have a history of passionate dancers. Sonkeng means "tree of peace," which is a symbol of unity and communication. It was also rumored to help women give birth to twins when used as a folk medical treatment.

I am from the city of Dschang located in the west province of Cameroon; however, I grew up in Douala, in the center province of Cameroon. Douala is commonly referred to as the economic capital of Cameroon, while Dschang is a mountain tourist resort area. Douala is the largest city because many companies, financial investments and economic activities are based there. The promise of job opportunities has attracted people to settle there in hopes of better financial futures.

By contrast, the touristy, mountainous area of Dschang has an elevation of more than 4,600 feet and is more rural. Dschang is favored by relatively cool temperatures and attractive scenery. Dschang has been an important agricultural and pig farming center because the soils are extremely fertile and temperatures are adequate for pork production.

I am the first born of a Bamileke (large ethnic group in the north and west) family of three children including two girls and one boy. Throughout high school I focused on science, mathematics, chemistry and physics, which shaped my path into the engineering field. My father always wanted me to have the best education because as they say in my country, "A family's achievement is reflected in the successful education of first-born children."

Studies in America

Coming to America to further my education was a huge decision for me. I went to Houston, Texas where I spent a semester in the English as a Second Language Program. Then, I spent a semester at Houston Community College, where I took some general courses for pre-engineering students. Next, I transferred to Howard Community College in Maryland where I was able to complete my associate degree in engineering and graduated with honors. Spring 2016 was my first semester at West Virginia University. Thanks to the WVU Extension CEOS scholarship program, I am looking forward to the chance to travel around West Virginia to discuss Cameroonian culture and learn about the state. This scholarship will help me achieve my goal to be a mining engineer with a degree in civil/environmental engineering with a minor in geology.

Geography

Referred to as "Africa in Miniature" because of its geological and cultural diversity, the Republic of Cameroon is bordered by Nigeria to the west, Chad to the northeast, and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of Congo to the south. Cameroon's coastline lies on the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Its area is approximately 183,569 square meters (slightly bigger than California) and its population is estimated to be 22.6 million (more than New York but less than Texas). Cameroon's

political capital is called Yaounde; however, most economic activity takes place in the financial city of Douala. Natural features include beaches, deserts, mountains, rainforests and savannas. The highest point in the country, Mount Cameroon, is at almost 13,500 feet in the southwest region of the country and has erupted twice: first in 1922 and again in 1999.

Brief History and Politics

During the Neolithic Era, the first inhabitants of Cameroon were the Baka people (sometimes called

Unity Palace – Cameroon Presidency.

Pygmies) around the southeastern rainforests, the Bantu people coming from eastern, southern and central Africa and the Sao people around Lake Chad. In 1472, Portuguese explorers reached the coast and named the area "Rio Dos Camaroes" (Shrimp River) because of the abundance of shrimps in the Wouri River. Fulani soldiers founded the Adamawa Emirate in the 19th century in the north. Western people (Bamileke) and northwestern people (Bamenda) established very powerful chiefdoms, kingdoms and fondoms in the grass fields region. Fondoms where led by a Fon, who was the head spiritual leader, judge and chief of a tribal area.

In 1884, Germany colonized the country and named the territory Kamerun as missionaries established churches and schools where German was taught. After World War I, the area was divided between French and British rule in 1919. To fight against colonization, a group of trade unionists created the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon, a political party that advocated for the independence of the country. After war during the 1950s, the French-administered territory became independent in 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon. In 1961, part of the British-governed area merged with the country to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon under President Ahmadou Ahidjo. The country was renamed the United Republic of Cameroon in 1972 and now is formally known as the Republic of Cameroon. The national motto is "Peace-Work-Fatherland." Political and social life has been relatively stable in the past few decades.

Demographics

The life expectancy in Cameroon is 53.69 years. During recent times, males and females have begun to be considered equally in the job field even though much of the professional workforce remains male-dominated.

In terms of family relationships, monogamous and polygamous marriages are both present in the country and the average Cameroonian family is very large and extended.

The country is home to more than 250 different linguistic groups associated with their ethnic groups; however, French and English are the official languages. German and Spanish are optional languages taught in high schools. Cameroonian Pidgin English has been popular and currently is widely spoken.

The most populous ethnic groups in Cameroon are the Douala, the Bassa, the Bamileke, the Beti, the Bamenda, the Pygmies and the Fulani people. My family comes from the Menoua region of the Bamileke tribe and our mother tongue is called "Yemba."

In terms of religion, Cameroon has a high level of religious freedom and diversity. The predominant religion is Catholicism practiced by 33 percent of the population concentrated in southern and western regions. About 30 percent of the country is Protestant. Other Christian denominations are

practiced by 5 percent of the population, while Islam is practiced by about 18 percent of the country. Northwest and southwest provinces are largely Protestant, while Muslims are concentrated in the north and west regions. However, practitioners of all faiths are found throughout the country even though each ethnic group still follows its Animist beliefs commonly called "tradition." People also widely believe in witchcraft and traditional rites.

Cultural Customs

Music and dance are an essential part of Cameroonian cultural ceremonies, festivals, social gatherings and storytelling. Most ethnic groups have specific traditional choreography for

males and females. Typically, singers present music in their native language. To accompany the flow of the song, people from the village can clap hands or use traditional instruments depending on the specific region and ethnic group. These may include bells, clappers, scrappers, drums, flutes, horns, whistles or xylophones.

In the national cuisine, Cameroonian people eat a variety of food. Tubers, such as cassava, potatoes, sweet potatoes, plantains and yams, are popular staples as well as corn and rice. Fufu (smashed fermented cassava rolled into balls and dipped into soups), groundnuts (peanuts), bush meats (wild animal game) and palm oils are also common. The most popular dishes in Cameroon are fufu served with eru (beef skin stew with spinach and evergreen vines) and ndole (spinach, bitter leaf, peanut, beef and shrimp stew) with plantains. Grilled fish, fried dough balls with black beans, couscous gumbo and kondre (plantain curry stew) with goat meat are also popular.

In terms of drinks, Cameroonians enjoy drinking beer, palm wine, sodas and water. Traditional dishes are enjoyed by eating with the right hand after washing. At breakfast common foods are leftovers, fruits, coffee or tea. Most popular snacks are sold by street vendors (doughnuts, boiled groundnuts, cooked snails or suya, a spicy type of grilled beef on a stick).

Cameroonians gather socially to watch sports – soccer especially. The national soccer team is well-known throughout the sporting world. The Cameroon National Football Team has been successful since its strong showing in the 1990 FIFA World Cup. Cameroon has won four African Cup of Nations titles. Samuel Etoo, is not only known as a famous soccer player, but also as a respected public figure because of his philanthropic work. Cameroonian athletes have also won medals at the Olympics, most prominent among them is two-time gold medalist triple jumper Françoise Mbango Etone.

In Cameroon, tourism is an expanding but relatively minor sector. In the 1970s, the Cameroonian government created the Ministry of Tourism to promote and encourage investments

A statue of a chief in Bana, West Region

in tourism activities and relevant fields such as airline companies, luxury hotels and travel agencies. Because Cameroon is nicknamed "Africa in Miniature," there are a variety of tourism activities that can be related to climate, culture and geography. The main touristic areas are along the coast, the major cities, the western highlands and the north of the country.

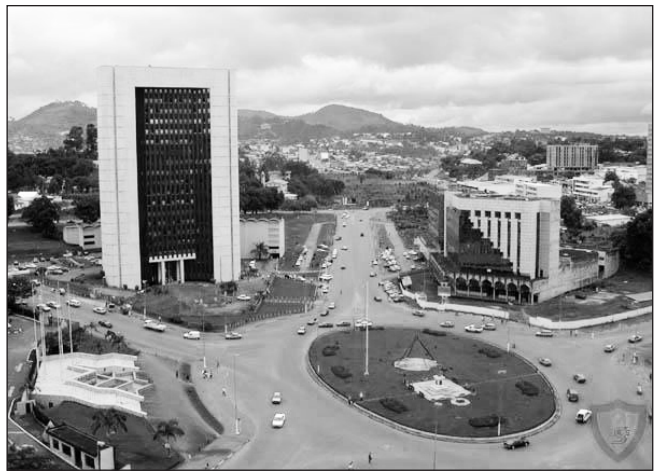
Cameroon wildlife attracts both safari lovers and big-game hunters. Tourists could see Africa's iconic animals including cheetahs, chimpanzees, elephants, giraffes, gorillas, hippopotami and rhinoceroses at popular wildlife reserves such as Waza National Park located in the far north region of Cameroon.

In the coastal areas, two major beach resort towns are popular. Limbe is an English-speaking town in the southwest region with black volcanic sand, and Kribi is a French-speaking city in South Cameroon with white sand beaches. Both attract tourists each year and have comfortable hotels around the area.

Mount Cameroon, also on the coast, is the highest mountain in Central and West Africa and draws hikers and climbers. There are many tin-roofed huts for hikers to sleep in during their trek up the mountain.

Volcanic plugs dot the landscape near Rhumsiki, Far North Region.

Yaounde, the political capital, is home to most of the national monuments and museums of the country. The western highlands offer beautiful mountain scenery, waterfalls and lakes, plus the altitude provides a cool climate for tourists who



Cameroon's political capital is Yaounde

are not used to the tropical season. The west is also home to traditional chiefdoms and fondoms, such as the sultanate of Foumban. Each chief typically has his own palace or compound that visitors may visit for a fee.

Economy

Cameroon's economy has held relatively steady in spite of unrest along the borders with neighboring countries. It is considered a lower middle income African country. Despite economic growth over the last 15 years, conditions for those in poverty have averaged out to indicate little change in living conditions.

Oil remains Cameroon's main export commodity and despite changes in world oil prices, still accounts for more than 40 percent of export earnings. Other major exports are cocoa, cotton, bananas, pineapples, coffee, lumber, aluminum, rubber and palm oil. The five largest export categories to the United States in 2014 were mineral fuel and oil ($99 million), wood and wood products ($33 million), rubber ($14 million) and cocoa ($14 million).

The mining industry in Cameroon is considered to be in a developmental stage with most activities being run by comparatively small businesses. Resources are diversely spread throughout the entire country. A few of the resources include limestone (for cement), bauxite (for aluminum),

cobalt, nickel, gold, iron, diamonds and uranium. The future looks promising for this industry as significant parts of the country's minable resources remain unexplored. As the country continues to develop, mining operations will expand with potential growth in the bauxite and iron ore industries.

Holidays

Most holidays in Cameroon are considered to be political or religious. Even though the country itself is a melting pot of religions and cultures, all citizens respect the religious holidays and celebrate appropriately.

Jan. 1 has a dual significance for the citizens – the celebration of New Year's Day and the celebration of the Independence Day of Cameroon from France in 1960.

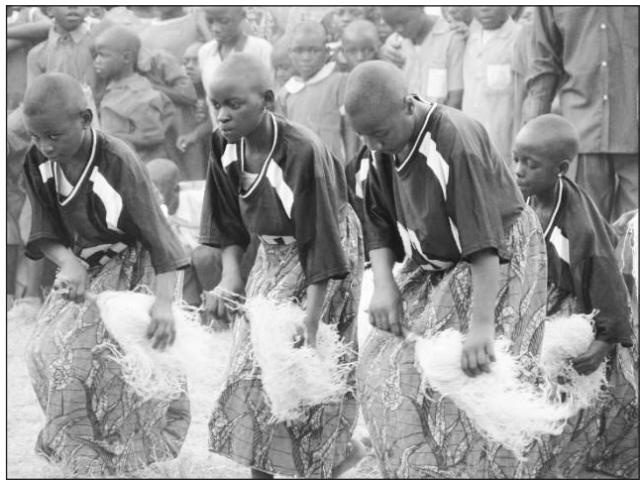
Feb. 11 is Youth Day, a holiday celebrating the youth of the country as the future of the nation. The government encourages young people to go to school and become the leaders of tomorrow.

May 1 is Labor Day, a holiday for all of the hard workers in Cameroon who helped build the economy of the country.

May 20 is the National Day of the Republic of Cameroon. It represents the day of foundation and transition from a federal state to a unitary state.

Aug. 15 is a Catholic holiday to commemorate the passing of the Virgin Mary. This symbolizes Mary's death and her body being taken up to heaven by angels for her to begin her spiritual life.

Dec. 25 represents Christmas Day and all activities are completely closed, except police stations and hospitals. Most of the Christians are at church or spending quality time with family over Christmas dinner.



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