



MISP Teaching in Cameroon: Hope for a Solution to Violence Against Refugee Women or a Channel of Exploitation and Enrichment?

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Abstract: This article focuses on a case study of non-governmental organisations that use popular naivety to initiate educational, social and other projects that are in reality fundamentally mercantilist and borderline Machiavellian. Organisations such as COHECF, the case of which is examined here, develop projects which they present to underinformed populations, relying on so-called partnerships with the United Nations. It is a question of raising the inconsistencies which demonstrate in reality that, under the pretext of educating and training people on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), this organisation is enriched by selling illusions to young people seeking employment. The MISP which is an instrument which allows the management of the difficulties of the populations in so many crises, and in particular wars, becomes in their perspective an opportunity to find extremely remunerative jobs. It is important that the major international institutions do what is necessary to prevent individuals from ripping off populations who are unfortunately often predisposed to believe in the fables of charismatic crooks.

1. INTRODUCTION

The range of violence against women is wide and very varied. We can cite, among other things, violence at the family level (abuse, forced marriages, domestic violence, incestuous rape, etc.), cultural violence (stoning, genital mutilation, breast ironing, ritual violence, etc.), ethnic cleansing rape, slavery sex, rape aimed at the satisfaction of selfish impulses and often leading to unwanted pregnancies and forced abortions, etc. However, the violence that will be discussed here is particularly that which is perpetrated in times of war, since it is to these that the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) tries to provide a solution.

The data used in this work were obtained following a participant observation process in the structures of the organisation called COHECF in Yaoundé (Cameroon), but also from interviews carried out with people who had undergone training at the MISP in the structures of this organism. This is a case study to show how an organisation can be created to, under cover of an apparent desire to work for the resolution of a social problem, attract funding for the enrichment of the members of said organisation.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

Sexual violence suffered by women in the context of armed conflict is undeniably recurrent. During civil wars, inter-nations or inter-coalitions many cases of rape are inevitably recorded. Roptin (2019) describes the contemporary context of this war violence as follows:

Jusque récemment, les violences sexuelles en temps de guerre étaient considérées comme un simple aspect contingent aux conflits ou comme participant d'une certaine économie de la guerre. Elles pouvaient ainsi servir à maintenir le moral des troupes, comme un butin pour les vainqueurs, une punition de la part de ceux-ci. Pendant longtemps le refus d'affronter la question de leur usage s'appuyait aussi sur l'idée que les violences sexuelles étaient un atavisme de certaines communautés, réservées aux confins du monde occidental. (2019; 5)

(Our translation: Until recently, sexual violence in time of war was considered as a simple contingent aspect of the conflicts or as part of a certain economy of war. They could thus be used to maintain the morale of the troops, like booty for the victors, a punishment on their part. For a long time, the

refusal to confront the question of their use was also based on the idea that sexual violence was an atavism of certain communities, reserved for the confines of the Western world.)

The statistics produced by various international organisations (Amnesty International or Human rights watch for example) or members of the UN interested in the issue have established that this sexual violence is not specific to a particular continent, or to countries in the South. Often stigmatised as being reluctant to respect human rights. While it is true that pauperism often has the corollary of promiscuity which leads to an environment conducive to a florescence of sexual excesses, it also remains true that such excesses are not the preserve of poor countries. They are transcontinental. Many rapes (about 2 million) were perpetrated by Red Army soldiers on East German women in 1945. Similar violence was observed in Chiapas in the former Yugoslavia. Eline Demaret noted that during the Bangladesh War of Independence, 200,000 Bengali women were raped by Pakistani soldiers. In Rwanda, it is estimated that around half a million women were raped during the 1994 genocide. Worse still, the rapes of these women have sometimes been orchestrated by soldiers of the peacekeeping forces. The scale and extent of the phenomenon explain the interest of international organisations in the cause of these privileged victims of the sexual violence inherent in times of war. This is how the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children has, through the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), undertaken to take charge of the battle against the abusive exploitation of the female body in crisis situations.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE MISP

The MISP contains a distance-learning module which is intended for the training of humanitarian workers able to work in emergency response teams in crisis situations specialised among others in the fields of health, design, camp management, community services or protection. Its first version dates back to 1996. It was designed by the Inter-Organisation Working Group (IOWG). It was a trial version called Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations: An Inter-Agency Field Manual. After adjustments, this document under the leadership of the Women's Commission became the MISP as we have it today.

3.1. Who is the MISP for?

It is primarily intended for specialists in emergency response teams in crisis situations. However, "it can also become a minimum standard, after a crisis situation, to ensure that priority reproductive health activities are carried out". This last point makes it useful for anyone able to absorb it.

The designers of this document estimate that 3 to 4 hours are enough to complete the training module it contains. It is designed to facilitate self-training. There is therefore a priori no need to enrol in any learning cycle to obtain the certificate offered at the end of the training (with regard to the purpose of the MISP training and the objectives attached to it, see annexes).

This module has been recovered by individuals constituted as NGOs in Cameroon who have shown the ambition to produce thousands of ready-to-use humanitarian workers. In this case, the case of COHECF is quite instructive.

4. EXPLOITATION OF THE MISP: SOLUTION OR ENRICHMENT CHANNEL?

First of all, the survey that provided the following data was carried out in 2008, but this data had not been used since then. But it turns out that the facts turned out to be reproducible in different environments, hence the interest of returning to this case study. Indeed, even today organisations like the one presented here operate in various places in Cameroon, in Africa and, one can suppose, in various places where poverty is rampant. Some end up exploiting an area and move to another under another name or under the same name, to exploit this new, still fertile ground to receive the illusions they sow. Our reflection is in line with the Chavagneux model presented as follows by Lascoumes (2020):

L'ambition de Chavagneux est de comprendre les ressorts de la crédulité humaine don't les conséquences sont aussi importantes dans les relations interpersonnel les qu'en économie et en politique. Quels sont les obstacles individuels et collectifs qui rendent souvent difficile la distinction entre les apparences et le réel, les promesses et les résultats? La confiance est un ressort fondamental

des activités humaines, en particulier économiques, mais elle n'est ni homogène, ni stable. Il existe toujours des jeux de confiance et le répertoire des « techniques de ruse » est très fourni. L'humain adore croire en des histoires, en des récits gratifiants qui lui font penser qu'il atteindra aisément ses buts, s'enrichira vite et qu'il démontrera ainsi aux autres sa puissance, faite de savoir-faire et de chance. Plus fondamentalement, Chavagneux propose un modèle combinant trois composantes : l'escroc, ses victimes, un public. Il se demande si l'escroquerie est une activité dominée par l'offre (celle des escrocs) ou par la demande (celle des gogos). Leurs interactions sont d'autant plus fortes que leurs échanges se font devant une audience face à laquelle les uns comme les autres jouissent de l'exhibition de leur talent et de leur réussite.

(Our translation: Chavagneux's ambition is to understand the springs of human credulity, the consequences of which are as important in interpersonal relations as in economics and politics. What are the individual and collective obstacles that often make it difficult to distinguish between appearances and reality, promises and results? Trust is a fundamental driving force of human activities, particularly economic ones, but it is neither homogeneous nor stable. There is always game of confidence and the repertoire of 'cunning techniques' is very extensive. Humans love to believe in stories, in gratifying accounts that make them think that they will easily achieve their goals, get rich quickly and thus demonstrate to others their power, made up of know-how and luck. More fundamentally, Chavagneux proposes a model combining three components: the crook, his victims, an audience. He wonders if the scam is an activity dominated by the offer (that of the crooks) or by the demand (that of the gogos). Their interactions are all the stronger as their exchanges take place in front of an audience in front of which both enjoy the exhibition of their talent and their success.)

Chavagneux's thought proves relevant when it comes to circumstances where the triptych scammer – instrument of scams – target audience is in question, as is the case in this instance where an educational offer becomes a tool of instrumentalization of naive populations for purely lucrative ends.

4.1. Presentation of the COHECF

The Christian community health care foundation (COHECF) is, according to its texts, a non-profit organisation based in Cameroon, and founded by Dr ASOMBA ASOMBA Tobias in 2000. Its headquarters are located in Bonadikombo (Limbé). She is primarily interested in reproductive health among refugees. It relies on the assistance of volunteers to achieve its objectives.

In 2007, COHECF set itself the challenge of training thousands of humanitarian workers mainly recruited from religious circles, especially Pentecostals. The choice of Christians from fundamentalist backgrounds by the COHECF would be justified, as emerges in the words of its trainers, by the honesty, rigour and mastery of the primary instincts shown by these believers.

The registration fees for this course amounted in 2008 to 200,000 CFA Francs. The high cost of this training did not prevent a large number of unemployed people from taking it up, the vast majority of them from evangelical Christian circles. They had the promise to exercise a ministry of relief to a part of humanity in danger with the guarantee of a substantial remuneration. The prospect of offering raped women the psychological support they need and of being the ones who apply the measures presented in the module to prevent other victims from occurring is certainly attractive, but ultimately who benefits really from this module?

5. CRITICAL LOOK AT THE COCHEF ENTERPRISE

Observing the activities of COHECF and listening to the comments of those responsible for training led us to make a few observations. First of all, a look at the content of the speeches made by promoters and trainers reveals some points that lead to confusion, which justifies questioning the true motives of said promoters and trainers.

A few of these elements:

- Promise of guaranteed use: the designers of this device themselves do not give such guarantees. The MISP is in no way intended to solve the problem of unemployment. In this case, it is presented as such to subscribers to the training offered by the organisation in question. The Women's Commission and United Nations partners see it quite simply as an instrument for managing populations in distress in various crisis situations, particularly war.

- Promise of very substantial remuneration: COHECF trainers promise those who enrol in their courses mountains and wonders. They constantly highlight the fact that all those who have taken this training will find jobs that will provide them with salaries of millions of CFA Francs. Obviously, these promises are not without effect, given the great support their training proposal has generated. Here again, neither the designers of the MISP nor the United Nations partners have any commitment to recruit a recipient of the certificate provided by the COHECF, which makes their promises totally illusory.
- Promise of travel on the occasion of the service: starting from the fact that the MISP has as field of application only countries at war and that ours is not, it is obvious from the training proposed that those who will have mastered it will not only be recruited to advantageous positions, but will also have the freedom to make regular international trips. We see here the exploitation of

Extraversion, so characteristic of fey mania, manifests itself not only abroad but also in Cameroon itself, thanks to the skilful use that freemen make of the idea of elsewhere. In the popular imagination, particularly among young people, the foreigner represents the space of hope where studies, jobs and wealth become possible. (Malaquais; 2001)

(Originally : L'extraversion, si caractéristique de la feymanie, se manifeste non seulement à l'étranger mais aussi au Cameroun même, grâce au savant usage que font les feymen de l'idée de l'ailleurs. Dans l'imaginaire populaire, particulièrement chez les jeunes, l'étranger représente l'espace de l'espoir où études, emplois et richesse deviennent possibles.)

Obviously, this promise is as fallacious as the first ones mentioned above.

- Promises that commit the Women's Commission to providing jobs to the thousands trained: it turns out that the Women's Commission, contrary to what the promoters of COHECF say, has made no commitment in this undertaking. After consulting the documents that present the said commission, it turns out that this way of proceeding is in no way part of its protocols.
- Emphasis on the benefits of sending Christians to the field (words which in a different context would be considered discriminatory): the population targeted by the COHECF was precisely that of the awakened churches. This can be understood, since it was a question of finding people sensitive to the human condition and who could wish to embark on a formation that would allow them to serve their neighbour while ensuring a decent standard of living. These provisions have made them ideal targets for this NGO.
- Emphasis on the COHECF as an essential springboard for employment after training at the MISP. Indeed, the COHECF was presented to trainees as the only way to access the privileges offered by the MISP or by the Women's Commission. This is again a big aberration, since it is a question of training content available to anyone who is interested in it, accessible on the internet, and for which one can directly contact the Women's Commission if necessary.

These elements show how attractive financially and professionally speaking were the proposals made by the COHECF to the individuals targeted for training. Many have signed up and donated a sum as registration fees that they absolutely did not need to donate, since the training is free online. Listing here was in no way motivated by humanitarian inclinations, but rather by the need for employment, competitive compensation, and the dream of a lifetime of travel and adventure. It seems unlikely that a commitment on such a basis could foster the training of genuine humanitarian workers.

A few words of investigation on the above:

- “Pour dire vrai, ce n'est pas trop pour les réfugiés que je me suis engagée là-dedans, moi je voyais un travail avec un bon salaire” (*Our translation : “To tell the truth, it's not too much for the refugees that I got involved in this, I saw a job with a good salary”*)
- “Ils sont venus à l'église pour faire la publicité. Ils disaient qu'après cette formation, on va voyager et travailler comme humanitaires...” (*Our translation: “They came to the church to advertise. They said that after this training, we will travel and work as humanitarians...”*)

- “Je ne suis pas insensible quand on me dit par exemple qu’une femme a été violée, mais si je dis que c’est pour ça que je suis entré dans l’affaire-là, je raconterai des histoires” (*Our translation* : “I’m not insensitive when people tell me, for example, that a woman has been raped, but if I say that’s why I got into the business, I’ll tell stories”)
- “Tu peux en étant humanitaire avoir même un 4 millions par mois si c’est l’argent que tu veux, mais surtout tu seras utile à des réfugiés” (propos d’un formateur s’adressant aux apprenants) (*Our translation* : “You can by being a humanitarian even have 4 million per month if that’s the money you want, but above all of you will be useful to refugees” (word of a trainer addressing the learners))
- “Si on vous a choisi ce n’est pas pour rien. Même certains soldats de l’ONU violent parfois les femmes dans les camps de réfugiés. Or, avec vous on sait qu’on n’aura pas ce type de problème. C’est pour cela qu’on focalise la formation sur les « Born again »” (propos d’un formateur s’adressant aux apprenants). (*Our translation*: “If we chose you it’s not for nothing. Even some UN soldiers sometimes rape women in refugee camps. However, with you we know that we will not have this type of problem. This is why we focus the training on ‘Born again’” (words of a trainer addressing the learners)).

On the other hand, considering the contradiction between what was announced and what happened after training, we realize that the mountain gave birth to a mouse. Indeed, when asked if she had seen someone leave as a humanitarian in one place or another, one respondent replied:

“ Personne! Tout ça c’était des histoires... Heureusement que je n’ai pas fini la formation-là” (*Our translation* : “Anybody! All that was stories... Luckily I didn’t finish that training.”)

And finally, a number of realities have been concealed from learners, namely the following:

- They could train themselves on the MISP module. In our investigation, we have initiated research on the said training and found the internet link for the training accessible to all, and which can give rise to self-training.
- The possibility of taking the online assessment without the COHECF competition was hidden from them. We ourselves carried out the online training without resorting to any intermediary and obtained a MISP training certificate in our name issued by the Women’s Commission.
- The possibility of obtaining by themselves on the Internet the support used for the formation was hidden from them. Indeed, the training material distributed like a precious open sesame that they had the immense privilege of reaching out to subscribers is a document within everyone’s reach on the internet.
- The free training was concealed from them.

So here we have a case in which a man (apparently) felt compassion for women in distress, and decided to create a ‘humanitarian’ work that could take care of reproductive health problems for refugees. But too many elements combine to show that it is not only the humanitarian fibre that drives him to action, hence the question of whether the MISP is for him and his NGO a solution, among other things, to the insecurity of the female gender in a situation of war or a means of enriching oneself. We will not answer this question abruptly, but it is important to note here that, although the methods used are legal, they do not fundamentally differ from the “Nigerian-style” scam in which “The methods of social engineering they employ, based on manipulation and psychological influence, are not the subject of great speeches. The demonstration of gains is enough to tell their skill. (Hanafi; 2020) we suggest that men who get involved in this fight for the respect of women’s rights do so for reasons that honour them. But also, a stricter examination of the deep motivations of certain partners or so-called partners of the United Nations and other international institutions for this cause would be of great benefit, insofar as it is possible. It would also be wise to find ways and means to inform the populations of poor countries, especially of the activities of these organizations with pernicious methods of exploitation, and even to undermine these activities as much as possible, perhaps by questioning the States whose populations are the most targeted. This case study is an attempt to sound the alarm about these institutionalized scammers.

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