

## THE CITY OF YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW: A PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



**HERITAGE** TRADITION CREATIVITY  
SUSTAINABLE **DEVELOPMENT** COOPERATION  
PARTICIPATION **IDENTITY** BOTTOM-UP

### 1. Background

Foumban is the administrative centre of the Noun Department in the Western Region of Cameroon. The city is about 70 kilometres northeast of Bafoussam, the regional capital, and has 350,000 inhabitants spread over 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> in the eight territories and three autonomous villages. Several ethnic groups live together in harmony, and as a result, the territory benefits from artistic and cultural expressions from very different origins: Tikar, Fula, Hausa, and Bamileke peoples, as well as various religious groups including Muslim (80%), Christian, Protestant (12%), Catholic (6%), and traditional African religions (2%).



However, issues such as municipal roads, security, and beautification are being addressed by the following initiatives:

- Fouban - A Clean, Green, and Lush City
- Operation: Grow and Move Forward

Fouban is an historic city with a rich past stretching back over six centuries. It was once the capital of the Bamoun Kingdom, and has seen profound change from sovereign monarchy and colonization to independence, declaration of a republic, and democracy.

## 2. Fouban and Culture

Fouban's cultural policy enshrines freedoms as sources of strength. It is necessary for people to exercise self-determination and re-define themselves as the source of a vibrant cultural, artistic, socio-political, and religious society.

The policy addresses specific political, social, economic, cultural, artistic, and religious needs. Its goal is to transform the community through religious and cultural values, in response to the needs, problems, or difficulties that a community faces, aims to solve, or vows to overcome. The programme shows a high level of consistency with other development policies. Fouban is an historic city, an artistic city, and a creative city where culture is very important. It draws its rich cultural life from a religious and ethical heritage rooted in traditional, modern, and environmental values, making the city open to sustainable human development.

The city's Department of Social and Cultural Affairs has also put together a new approach. At the neighbourhood level there are hygiene and health committees.

There is a direct link between the city's policy and Agenda 21 for culture:

1. They both incorporate the relationship between citizenship, culture, and sustainable development
2. They establish an international framework on feasible and measurable commitments and actions
3. Operationalization of Agenda 21 for culture (2004)
4. Strengthening the city's role in creating development policies both for inhabitants, and with them
5. Contribution to the Post-2015 Development Agenda with an essential place for culture



The nine commitments of Agenda 21 are part of the initiative: Cultural Rights - through heritage, with modern and future perspectives; Heritage, Diversity, and Creativity; Governance of Culture; Culture and Education; Culture and Environment; Culture and Economy; Culture, Equity, and Social Inclusion; Culture, Information, and Knowledge; Culture, Urban Planning, and Public Space. The policy in Foumban also ties in with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations. Through its implementation, the policy allows for local development in several areas: economic, cultural, educational, and environmental (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12)

### **3. Objectives and Project Implementation**

#### **3.1 Primary and Specific Objectives**

The main goal is to implement a policy that empowers people to discover or rediscover their identity. The overall objective is therefore to help people affirm their roles as heirs to their own human history and time, while remaining open to others and the environment, and focusing on sustainable human development. This requires taking into account culture, art, education, religion, and socio-political life.

Under this policy, Foumban has established itself as a “Creative City”, “Capital of Arts”, and the centre for the universal common human good. It is a place where the public is both actor and audience member; where civil society, policies, and the media can fully embrace their roles.

Specific objectives:

- Education - Democracy, participation in public management decisions, and rediscovery or better understanding of history
- Empower identity and individual persons in a world in need of humanization
- Safeguarding know-how for the production and consumption of local products through the development of traditional culinary arts
- Facilitation of interfaith dialogue and the expression of religious art



- Foumban, city of art and expression of cultural, artistic, and religious freedoms, among others
- Creation of the Agenda 21 for culture board in Foumban

### 3.2 Project Development

#### Main Actions Carried Out

**Renovation and Restoration of the Foumban Royal Palace:** The public contributed more than 150 million XAF for the revitalization of the ruined palace.

**The Nsom:** The great historical fortification was rediscovered, salvaged, and restored. The Relay and Walking Marathons around the Nsom have been organized in addition to forgotten traditional games and sports.

**Development of the tourism industry:** Artisan work and artistic creations are featured, such the annual **Best Drummer Competition**. It revives ancestral instruments, as well as music and choreography inspired by innovative, traditional practices through contemporary approaches, such as the **Bamoun AYUE Opera**.

**The Festival of Artistic Masterpieces:** Artists host an exhibition at the City Hall plaza.

**Interfaith Activities (Children's Christmas Tree at the VIVI Foundation, Quran Festival, Muslim Music Festival, Interfaith Prayer and Exchange Day, Bantous' Days)**

**The Foumban and Regional Carnival:** This is an opportunity for national and international exchanges in which everyone is both an active participant and spectator.

**The coffee festival** includes capacity-building for coffee growers and excursions to coffee plantations. The *From Field to Cup Coffee Festival* inspired FESTICOFFEE the Great National and International Coffee Gathering in Cameroon.

The programme is organized into 5 phases:





- Awareness-Raising, Information, Training, and Education - Consolidation of Know-How, Innovation, Creation, and Transformation in order to strengthen heritage and sustainable development
- Acquiring Means, Resources, and Knowledge in the field of New Technologies and Digital Education
- Education in religious ethics
- Cooperation between local, national, regional, and international institutions

The programme aims to affect the people of Foumban, its region, all Cameroonian people, and even artisans or artists across Africa and around the world. In the end, it is people who must discover and implement the mechanisms of sustainable development. Each year, all the city's activities cost about 150 million Central African CFA francs.

The following initiatives showcase the city's efforts and engage its inhabitants, who are involved in the Decentralized Cooperation framework:

- Twinning Foumban and Jouy-en-Josas, France - Agreement within the framework of Health, Economy, and Culture
- Mediterranean Network of Medinas
- AIMF
- AFRICITES

## 4. Impact

### 4.1 Direct Impact

The implementation of this policy has raised awareness throughout the municipal government about the importance of history, the need for openness to cultural diversity, and consideration for various



stakeholders. All this has led to a broader, more varied, and richer level of cultural expression. The city has opened up because of the commitments made by collective and individual actors focused on political, economic, cultural, artistic, and religious rights to ensure sustainable human development.

This policy led to the emergence of new artistic and cultural forms. The population adopted the title, “Foumban: A Creative City”.

Women are also drivers of development through the Solidarity and Mutual Aid Association, which is organized at the regional level. They have helped set up a radio station, a mutual health organization, and a maternity facility. Thanks to a solidarity fund, more than 200 associations have benefited from social and individual microcredits over the last two years. Capacity-building workshops are organized for their support. The DRUFAPE project is also supported by women: Development, Reinforcement of the Use of Improved Housing, and Protection of the Environment.

Youth are given support in different sectors according to the needs of each area. These include the rights and responsibilities of motorcycle taxi drivers or training courses and employment for youth in archival records, computer science, and local materials manufacturing. Furthermore, sports tournaments are organized at the neighbourhood level with city-wide finals. Youth from other regions of Cameroon are hosted during such events. Several Mount Cameroon Climbs have been organized, after training on nearby mountains in the region.

#### 4.2 Key Factors

- Public ownership of, and responsibility for, the “Best Self” initiative
- Education in democracy, citizenship, openness to others, dialogue, peace-building, and co-existence
- The specific role of the 3 types of actors: Politics, Media, and Civil Society:
- EAE: African School of Ethics (*Ecole Africaine d’Ethique*)
- JRRE: National Days of Reflection and Exchange (*Journées Républicaines de Réflexions et d’Echanges*)



#### 4.3 Ongoing Work

Various partners help ensure continuity for this policy each year by organizing cultural and artistic events. Some annual activities have already been held 8 times.

The only project that has not yet started, and which itself represents the epitome of cultural policy, is the **process of establishing the AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE board**. Undertaking such a cultural initiative with international and universal weight will be a culminating moment for the city's cultural policy. With places where citizens can meet and exchange or share with each other, Agenda 21 for culture will truly facilitate expressions of uniqueness.

### 5. Further Information

The City of Foumban was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 - May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2018, and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices implemented under Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Dr. Adamou Ndam Njoya, Mayor of Foumban, Cameroon.  
Contact: [adamoundamnjoya \(at\) yahoo.fr](mailto:adamoundamnjoya@yahoo.fr)