

## **Human rights defender's story: Nicoline Nwenushi wazeh Tumasang from Cameroon**

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**"I hope for a future built on compassion, unity and hope." Nicoline Nwenushi wazeh Tumasang, a courageous and inspiring human rights defender from Cameroon shares her story of hope, resilience and fight for gender equality.**



**Dear Nicoline, tell us about yourself and about what your organisation does.**



I am Nicoline Nwenushi wazeh Tumasang, a gender and development specialist, jurist, human rights defender and civil society activist. I am also the CEO and founder of Pathways for Women's Empowerment and Development and its Integrated agricultural Training Center (PaWED/IATC), whose missions are to ensure a gender just society in which men and women enjoy equity, contribute and benefit as equal partners in the development of the country and the world. I am also one of the chairs of Cameroon Women's Peace Movement (CAWOPEM).

My priority areas of intervention include but are not limited to research on women's equal and meaningful participation; empowerment for women and girl's for economic rights and freedom; campaign and advocacy towards the realisation of the right to education for crisis-affected and displaced children and youth; advocacy and campaign to end the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and limit atrocities especially sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) on women and girls; capacity and movement building; advocacy and lobbying; networking and fundraising.

**The year is 2050 : what does the world look like - in particular for women, ethnic minorities, LGBTI people, etc. ?**

It is a world where gender and social justice prevails and all stakeholders work in synergy to ensure equity, safety, and contribute their full potential and benefit as common humanity.

**The year is still 2050: how did your work help achieve the vision you just described?**



Through designing advocacy and campaign strategies, empowering, creating awareness and holding service providers accountable. Contributing to building the resilience of the vulnerable masses and creating safe spaces for women, girls and other socially vulnerable groups.

### **Was there a defining moment in your life that motivated you to defend human rights?**

Before joining the civil society world as a human rights defender, I palpated vulnerability in accessing justice. These vulnerabilities, especially that of widows, triggered my passion to defend human rights. However, the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016 was a decisive period for me.



### **Do you face any threats and attacks because of your work?**

Although I have personally not faced any physical attacks and threats, our work has been greatly impeded by intimidation from government, shrinking civic space measures, insecurity due to the ongoing armed conflicts and government's denial to call for ceasefire, as well as threats and intimidation from the non-State armed groups.



### **What could be done for you to be able to work and live safely?**



A specific legislation on the protection of human rights defenders particularly women human rights defenders, scrupulous punishment of offenders and compensation for damage will provide us with a safe and conducive working environment. Also, funding of our projects will give our work better visibility and respect.

### How does the Covid-19 pandemic affect your work?

From an economic perspective, COVID-19 and the lockdown measures have devastating effects on the women's economic empowerment projects that we were running hitherto. Our inability to sell three thousand (3000) broiler chickens in our Integrated Agricultural Training Center (IATC) has caused us damages worth some \$8000 and a risk for the Microfinance institution to forfeit our assets used as collateral to obtain the loan. This equally means that the women who were beneficiaries of this project and had gained a certain degree of financial independence and security from gender-based violence have lost their livelihood activities and will have to strive to start all over again. Furthermore, telecommuting has left most of our beneficiaries behind due to the lack of android gadgets, sustainable connectivity and power supply.



### What is your hope for the future?

I hope for a future built on compassion, unity and hope especially for the vulnerable masses, where our common humanity and shared vulnerabilities is understood by all. A future where toxic masculinities and patriarchy are dismantled.

*Top photo credit: PaWED*

*Photo credit (in order of appearance): PaWED; Center regional delegation of MINPROF for PAWED; Yaoundé's Women's March against Kumba killings for PaWED; Center regional delegation of MINPROF for PAWED, IATC*