



Second Chance Education (SCE) Signature Features in Cameroon



Second
Chance



The approach of UN Women's Second Chance Education programme recognizes that, for women who are marginalized by crisis, poverty or harmful social norms, transformational change requires more than the offer of training or education alone. SCE works with women who have been held back by gender-based barriers and discriminatory practices all their lives without necessarily being aware of it. SCE provides access to practical support and life skills training that enable women to participate fully in whichever learning pathway they choose. Similarly, it recognizes the importance of social learning and personalized support throughout the SCE journey. This scaffolded approach has led to high retention and low dropout rates and is represented by SCE's signature features.

The SCE signature features are outlined below including specific examples from SCE Cameroon.

SCE Signature Features





ABOUT SCE IN CAMEROON

UN Women's Second Chance Education (SCE) and Vocational Learning Programme, executed through UN Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) initiative, offers refugee and internally displaced women in the conflict-affected areas of Cameroon across seven regions (Far North, East, Adamawa, Littoral, Center, Northwest and Southwest Region), along with vulnerable women from host communities, training and learning opportunities in entrepreneurial, employment and life skills. In Cameroon, SCE has been implemented since 2019 in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF), reaching over 12,000 participants.

SCE's main objective: More marginalized women have access to, participate in and achieve quality learning, entrepreneurial and employment outcomes.

This objective is achieved through four outcomes:

1. High-quality educational content and learning pathways benefit more marginalized women.
2. Increased employment, livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities for marginalized women.
3. Reduced harmful and discriminatory social norms that disadvantage marginalized women.
4. Enhanced policy and financing frameworks that improve access to education and employment for marginalized women.

SCE Cameroon is carried out by one government partner, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) and the following civil society organizations: Big Steps Outreach Network (BONET), Planet Positive and Cameroon Youth School Tech Incubator (CAYSTI).



MINPROFF

Since 2019, **MINPROFF** has been engaged as an implementing partner with nine women empowerment centres where trainings take place.



CAYSTI became an implementing partner in 2020 and has one ICT (Information and Communication Technology) training centre which offers e-learning and opportunities to develop contextualized learning content.

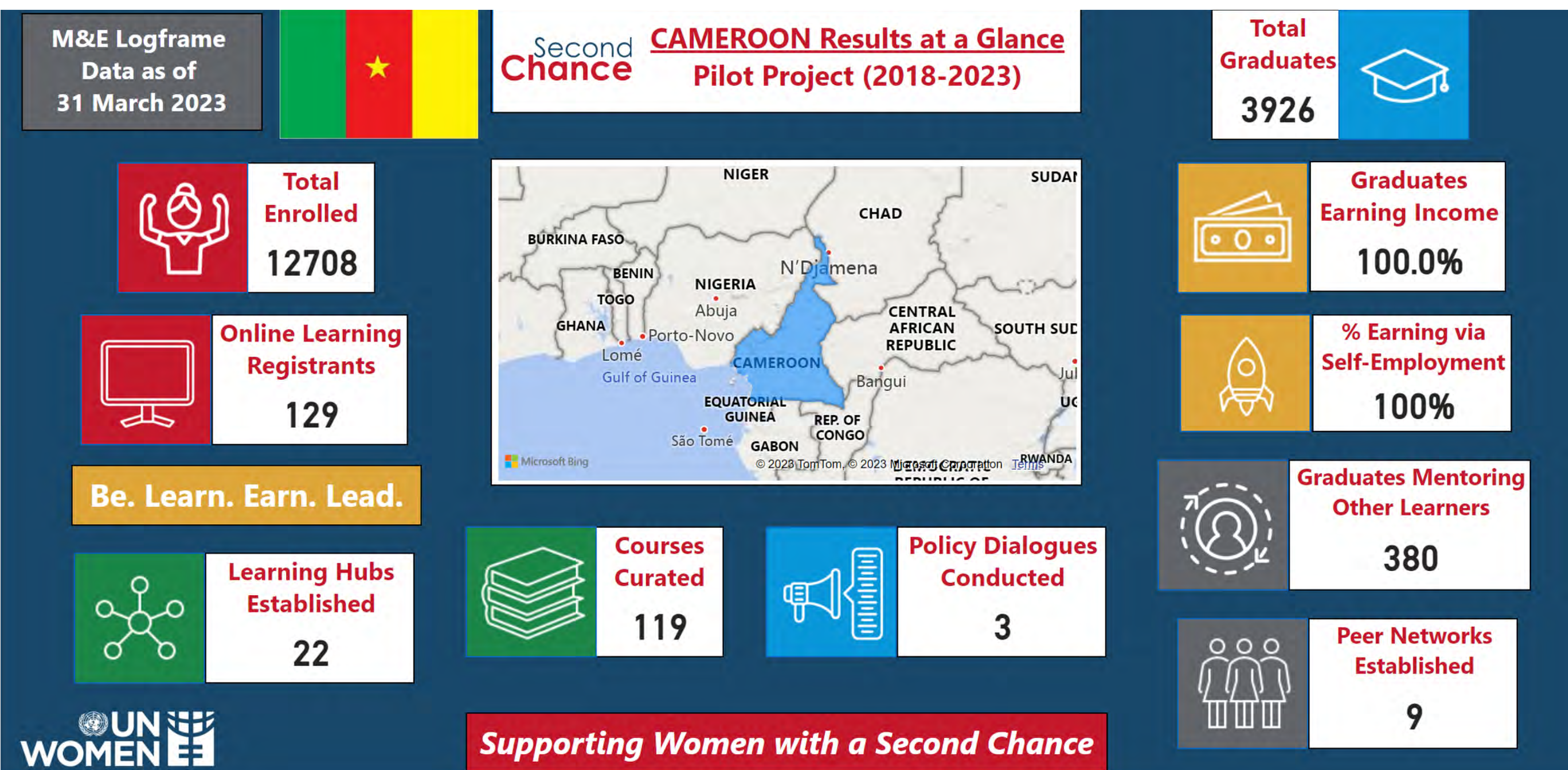


BONET joined SCE as an implementing partner in 2021 and has been carrying out research, establishing and supporting project networks and community-based mechanisms and building the project's knowledge base.



Planet Positive became an SCE implementing partner in 2021 and has developed user-friendly and contextualized content for the programme.

SCE CAMEROON RESULTS AT-A-GLANCE



SUPPORT TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS

Support is provided to remove the constraints to women’s participation in SCE. It may include access to care services to alleviate their care responsibilities such as child, disability and elder care, safe and affordable transport to the hubs, and engaging with men in families and communities to build their support. It can also include referrals to complementary social services to access professional support for gender-based violence, housing, personal finances, health or other issues.

Among the most common gender-based barriers that affect potential SCE participants in Cameroon is child marriage, which is prevalent in the northern regions. Denial of resources, intimate partner violence, and early and unwanted pregnancies also affect women across project sites. These barriers prevent women from fully exercising their agency and independence as well as accessing and participating in humanitarian activities.

To address this, SCE Cameroon carries out sensitization and awareness-raising sessions with a strong focus on the prevention of forced and early marriage and with the engagement of men and boys for positive behavioral change.

Sensitization are done door to door and in gathering places like churches and markets. Traditional leaders and community leaders are among the main targets for sensitization because they tend to be the custodians of deeply rooted traditions that are passed on from one generation to the next and which can encompass harmful practices that hinder women's education. As a result, some of them have become champions of the SCE project.

However, changing gender roles commonly leads to push back from community members including men and traditional leaders. This makes sensitization even more vital in clarifying and raising awareness about the importance of women's education and economic empowerment.

SCE also ensures that the family members of participants, particularly the parents of younger participants, are properly informed and sensitized so that they can support their daughter's participation in the programme.



DAY CARE CENTERS

Ensuring the leave no one behind approach, 6 women's empowerment training centres are equipped with child-friendly spaces and TV sets, hard drives loaded with educational and other videos, carpets, mattresses, pillows, educational toys, bicycles, balls, first-aid boxes, plastic chairs with tables, mats, arm boards, chalk and blackboards. These have facilitated the participation of mothers with babies or small children who would have hindered their participation.

The women empowerment centres have been equipped with infrastructure essential for training, including solar energy systems, e-learning equipment, internet connection and tailoring equipment.

"It is thanks to the SCE project that I did not allow my daughter to enter into an early marriage. I sent her to learn tailoring for one year and surprisingly, she was supported with a start-up kit upon her graduation. Now she is married at the right age and not depending on her husband for her wellbeing. Instead, she supports her husband, and I am certain that she is not experiencing domestic violence because she is economically empowered."

- Quote from a traditional leader in the Ngam refugee camp

"After SCE, since I have financial autonomy, I have confidence in myself. Before, I told myself that I was not useful, now that I know that I can take care of myself and that someone can also ask me for help, I have become another person, I am more fulfilled. Even in the household, my husband respects me more and he already knows that he can come to me to ask me for a loan of money."

- Quote from a SCE participant in Bertoua



GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE LIFE SKILLS



Training and support in this area enable women to develop self-confidence, a sense of agency, and aspirations aligned with their interests, skills and circumstances. It is centred on an awareness of participants' strengths and the potential of all individuals, and the part that gendered roles, stereotypes and discriminatory norms play in everyone's lives. Gender-transformative life skills are context-specific and attempt to address intersecting inequalities. This training may provide the opportunity for participants to revisit, adapt or change established attitudes, behaviours and practices at individual, household and community level, often resulting in participants assuming new roles and responsibilities which may differ from socially expected gender roles (UN Women, 2020)¹. It is an essential foundation for subsequent training and for ensuring sustainable change to women's lives and community resilience.

In Cameroon, SCE seeks to build skills and foster behaviours among participants that facilitate communication, decision-making, management of emotions, relationship development and overall success in life. Apart from the training offered by facilitators through sensitization sessions, women are also encouraged to have regular group discussions where they can learn from each other. Women with success stories on particular topics share their experiences and their techniques in facing situations such as gender-based violence (GBV) in their homes or communities. These discussions promote self-reflection, self-awareness and the generation of new knowledge derived from continuous and iterative cycles of action and reflection within the groups.

The main themes that are covered under life skills in Cameroon are leadership, family planning, GBV, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Importantly, digital skills are also considered a key life skill that is offered through SCE, and expands access to employment opportunities. For many participants, SCE offers the opportunity to interact with computer equipment for the very first time in their lives.

Lastly, preserving participants' dignity is essential for maintaining their self-esteem and confidence and ensuring their ability to cope in stressful humanitarian situations. SCE has therefore also provided dignity kits composed of reusable menstrual pads, bath soap, multiple pairs of underwear, detergent powder, sanitary napkins, a flashlight, toothpaste, a toothbrush, a bucket and a comb.

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Photo: UN Women/ Maria Fernanda Novelo Duarte

ONE SCE LEARNING PATHWAY

Women participate in one of three learning pathways: entrepreneurship/self-employment, employment/vocational training or return to formal education. Each pathway is a progression of courses based on a globally standardized curriculum with locally relevant content tailored to participants in language, imagery and type of media. Industry and government connections are provided to link participants to education, jobs or business development opportunities during and after training.

The labour market assessments conducted for this programme found that across many of the humanitarian settings where SCE is implemented, job opportunities are quite limited, particularly in the Northern and East regions. For the Centre and Littoral regions, finding employment in the bigger cities is possible and in the Southern regions some participants have been placed under internship programmes. Women's mobility can also be restricted by cultural norms, forcing participants to only carry out activities close to home. These unique conditions led the SCE programme in Cameroon to start off by only offering the entrepreneurship/self-employment learning pathway.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Through this, SCE Cameroon provides participants with training and start-up kits upon graduation in areas such as tailoring, ICT, animal raising, agriculture, and petty trade. The provision of the start-up kits has been vital for women's ability to become entrepreneurs and to generate an income upon graduation through self-employment. Many participants have managed to grow their businesses in the years after graduation and others, who were organized in groups, have been able to support new groups of women to become entrepreneurs themselves. Nearly 5,000 women have graduated from the entrepreneurship pathway and received start-up assistance for their own business.

RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION

In 2023, SCE Cameroon started to offer the return to formal education pathway in the Northwest region. In the past, it was challenging to offer this because the duration of the programme did not match the duration of school completion. However, in 2022, BONET enrolled 103 girls (aged between 15-20) in exam-oriented classes (Secondary and High-School levels) which cover arts and science subjects and are taught by government teachers. Participants are simultaneously supported with other basic school needs such as the payment of school fees, supplies such as books, pens and uniforms, and the registration process for taking the exam. The exams are offered by the Ministry of Secondary Education which offers ordinary certificates for those who successfully pass and advanced-level certificates for those in high school who make it to the end.



ADVOCACY AND POLICY WORK



SCE draws on its experience on the ground to advocate for removal of the structural constraints to women's participation in education, training and the workforce. SCE advocates for reforms of laws, policies and financial frameworks and the introduction of government programming to enhance women's economic participation.



Advocacy and policy work in Cameroon is challenging because of very cumbersome procedures and the high cost of getting data to showcase the issue of concern. However, the programme did identify an important challenge to which it could contribute: displaced women and girls commonly lack civil status documents including birth certificates and identity cards as they are lost during displacement. This prevents them from accessing learning and income-generation opportunities including formal education.

SCE researched the gaps and connected with different stakeholders including the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, MINPROFF, the Ministry of Local Development and Decentralisation, and civil society organisations. Under the leadership of MINPROFF, SCE developed a strategy document for lobbying the government for policy change in order to guarantee access to civil status documents for displaced women and girls in Cameroon. This has resulted in 420 SCE participants receiving birth certificates and National ID Cards. Generation of e-documents is planned for later in 2023.

In addition to the 420 beneficiaries of civil status documents, the project also supported the National Civil Status Office (BUNEC). This is the main body in charge of establishing civil status documents with printers to facilitate the issuing of birth certificates for displaced women and girls.

MEDIA

National and local media, including radio, TV and newspapers, are highly engaged in SCE activities and help to promote education for women and girls. SCE has featured on Ladies News, Equinox TV, CRTV, Canal 2 and Sky News.

E-LEARNING



E-learning is offered in some form to all participants, whether SCE is delivered through physical hubs or entirely online. E-learning allows flexibility in the delivery of learning with in-person, online, and hybrid approaches used according to circumstances, making it easier for women to participate.

While e-learning initially seemed unfeasible in a humanitarian context like Cameroon, where the lack of adequate facilities appeared to be a major challenge, the SCE programme mobilized the support of private sector partner HP to fully equip the learning hubs with solar power, internet, computers, tablets and other equipment. This enabled the programme to offer digital skills training and e-learning to participants, including an eight-month training on ICT.

E-learning has been possible through the use of the learning platforms Kolibri and, more recently, EdApp. Both learning platforms can be accessed online in the learning hubs and their content can be downloaded to be utilized offline in other locations. This gives all participants, not only those pursuing the ICT training, the chance to boost their digital competencies.

More recently, the programme has expanded to urban areas in the Northwest, Southwest, Littoral and Centre regions where participants' digital skills are more advanced. SCE's new implementing partner, CAYSTI, offers participants more advanced digital skills training such as in coding and building websites. Through CAYSTI, participants also learn how to sell their products online utilizing social media channels.





PERSONALIZED SUPPORT

Personalized support underpins women's participation throughout their SCE journey. It includes social and instructional support and can be provided through a range of approaches including mentoring, tutoring, peer networks and advisors.

Personalized support has been a key aspect of SCE implementation in Cameroon. Participants are offered mentorship throughout their journey by SCE graduates who are trained as mentors. They carry out home visits and meet participants at their places of work where they have started their own business. Mentors offer peer support based on the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the programme.

SCE participants are also provided with individualized support through an array of personalized referrals to psycho-social support, GBV prevention and response services, and sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The project has enhanced its sustainability by establishing and strengthening community-based mechanisms together with peer- and graduate networks. This has fostered a spirit of networking and collaboration while building social capital and a sustainable support system of women, by women and for women. Each network comprises dynamic women and girls experienced in the various livelihood activities who serve as mentors, coaches and support figures to their peers.

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GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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