



**"How to reduce the technological divide for a full contribution of women to the development of Cameroon"**

**An article about the**

**Conference organized by the Digital Coalition on**

**March 07 2022**

**At PrépaVogt.**

---

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>- 2 -</b>
TITLE: HOW THE DIGITAL COALITION IS TACKLING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN CAMEROON .....	- 3 -
1. A MALE DOMINATED DISCIPLINE.....	- 3 -
2. WOMEN CAN MAKE IT: .....	- 3 -
3. ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:.....	- 5 -
4. ADVICE FOR THE NEW GENERATION OF ENGINEERS.....	- 5 -
THE END.....	- 5 -



## TITLE: HOW THE DIGITAL COALITION IS TACKLING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE PROBLEM IN CAMEROON

---

Women have always been underrepresented in scientific, technical, and engineering fields. This is due to the fact that for a long time, these careers were perceived as masculine, and did not attract the female population. Since 2010, the **Digital Coalition is working on attracting and integrating more women into STEM careers and at bridging the technological divide.**

### 1. A MALE DOMINATED DISCIPLINE

---

Archimedes was a man. So were Thomas Edison and Neil Armstrong. These names are well known in the engineering community, and the list goes on. We know that men have always been more invested in STEM than women. This phenomenon is called the STEM Gap. According to Dr. Sapna Cheryan a Social psychologist at Northwestern University, the gap is due to several factors including: masculine culture and the lack of exposure to computers and physics that women face in early childhood (Cheryan, 2017).

Let's look into **masculine culture**: It can be defined as a culture that stresses different expectations for men than women. Here, men are expected to focus on material success and be the bread winners. Women, on the other hand are expected to be nurturing and focus on quality of life. Deviation from this pattern is usually not accepted or frowned upon. This was the case until 1950 when women first joined the workforce. Although many women have now joined and proven themselves in their careers, they still do not have easy access to certain positions.

While there have been many outstanding women in engineering like Mary Hegeler Carus (the first woman engineer) or Edith Clarke (the creator of the calculator) the ratio of men to women in engineering is still very low.

The digital coalition is working on tackling this problem at its roots. There have been numerous events and actions that aim to attract young girls to engineering. One of these events took place the 07th of March 2022 at the PrépaVogt campus.

The theme of the conference was: "**How to reduce the technological divide for a full contribution of women to the development of Cameroon**". The date of the 7<sup>th</sup> was befitting, as it was in preparation for the international woman's day on March 8<sup>th</sup> and in celebration of Engineer day on March 4<sup>th</sup>. The aim was to motivate young girls to pursue a career in STEM by presenting them with a panel of four outstanding women, three of them being successful engineers.

### 2. WOMEN CAN MAKE IT:

---

The conference kicked off with the moderator introducing the panel. We had:

- **Mrs Reine Mbang Essobmadje**: Engineer, CEO of Evolving Consulting and Co-founder of the Digital Coalition association,
- **Mrs. Doudou Juliette Mayou Kemajou**: Design Engineer in Mechanical



Engineering at CAMRAIL,

- **Mrs. Raïssa Djiwo:** General engineer, executive at CAMRAIL, and Instagram influencer,
- **Mrs. Albane Hardy:** Academic Director.

Each woman detailed her academic and professional background. They shared all the experiences that led to their current success. For many, there had been obstacles linked to their gender. Mrs Raïssa Djiwo's family, for example, tried to dissuade her from picking engineering as her major. For them, "it was a career path that was not suitable for women". She recalls that when she joined the workforce, her colleagues, all of them males, were surprised to see a high performing woman engineer. The figures confirm her experience: women make up only 13% of engineers in the US (US bureau of labour statistics) . In US universities, 18% of engineering students are female. Data collection processes might allow us to know the exact figures in Cameroon soon, but until then, the STEM Gap is felt by most women in engineering, as confirmed by the panel, who agreed to say that more women need to consider engineering as a career path.



**From left to right: Mrs Reine Mbang Essobmadje, Mr. Dania Ebongue (Moderator), Mrs Doudou Juliette Mayou Simo Kemajou, Mrs Raïssa Djiwo and Mrs Albane Hardy.**

---

### 3. ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:

---

Another problem that was addressed is the technological divide. This refers to the gap between people who have access to modern information and communications technology and those who don't. As with the STEM gap, young girls have had a harder time having access to technology because of their gender.

The appearance of social media has encouraged more girls to use technology. During the conference, the moderator asked members of the audience about their use of social media as a tool. Participants responded that they used social media for various reasons most of which were educational, or to network. The panel agreed on the fact that social media could be used as a means of bridging the technological gap.

---

### 4. ADVICE FOR THE NEW GENERATION OF ENGINEERS

---



The students at PrépaVogt had several questions for Mrs. Reine Mbang, co-author of the book "rising to the top" where she shares her journey and career as a woman engineer.

Among other things, they wanted to know how, as a woman, she was able to manage an international team of experts. One of them asked her how she found the motivation to get into engineering after two unfruitful years in medical school.

Her answer was rather simple: As women, we are multifaceted beings. The key to success lies in a meticulous prioritization of tasks, passion for what we do, and hard work. Also, women have a double challenge in society. Therefore, we need pick our battles wisely and fight them well.

Finally, Sonia Ndongo, Engineer and Consultant at Evolving Consulting, took the floor to define once again the concept of technological divide and to summarize a few ways to reduce said divide. According to her, it can be done through various ways including Education and awareness.

- **Education:** By encouraging girls to develop technology-related skills from an early age, thus avoiding the stigmatization of children by gender.
- **Awareness:** By Getting female students accustomed to the plethora of new careers paths related to the digital field.

This contribution concluded the conference, after which a small cocktail took place at around 5.30 PM. For management and the Digital Coalition team, this was another successful event, and a seed planted in good soil.

---

**THE END.**

---

# WOMENTOR

## HALL OF FAME

**Ils s'engagent pour le leadership féminin**  
*They are committed to female leadership*

