



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

# RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

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The Case of National Oil Refinery Company-SO.NA.RA (Sarl),  
CAMEROON

Master thesis in Strategic Human Resources Management & Labor Relations

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Author: Mufu Godwill Fomunjong

Supervisor: Vedran Omnamović

## Abstract

**Title:** Recruitment and Selection: The Case of National Oil Refinery Company-SO.NA.RA (Sarl), Cameroon.

**Introduction:** This study focuses on the implications of the recruitment policy and the overall business strategies of SO.NA.RA-Cameroon. The study also strives to illuminate CSR as a strategic ingredient to be integrated in HRM theory and practice by companies and to take cognizance of local employment issues. Such a requirement more likely enhances the reputation of firms within the vicinities where they operate, and guarantees that their working environments remain conducive and serene for sustainable production as echoed by CIPD (2007b).

**Objectives:** The objective of this Thesis is to study the Recruitment and Selection Strategies in SONARA. The study attempts to unravel questions associated with human resource allocation inefficiencies that is perceived to be perpetuated by corruption or discriminatory tendencies by some organizations or companies in Cameroon.

**Methods:** The study is an exploratory case study. It was carried out with the use of a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews.

**Theories:** The Human Capital Theory and The Resourced Based View of Firms were the dominant theories in the study complemented by the Equity Approach. These theories underline that firms' successes are determined by the quality of their human resources. The theories were relevant in the analysis of the empirical data by creating spaces for the researcher to make inductions as well as deductions.

**Findings:** Findings reveal that despite a well-conceived recruitment strategy framework aimed at attracting the right people in the right places, discrimination and corruption are major factors that infringed on the efficiency and effectively of the recruitment policy in SO.NA.RA. The study also identifies CSR as an alternative route to the public delivery of development. Companies should not see it only through the lens of the business case. Activities of CSR by companies should be institutionalized to recognize employment issues at least from within the immediate localities where such companies operate. The study further opens a gap for further research on the significance of the practice of the psychometric test in the last part of the recruitment and selection process in the company.

**Keywords:** *SO.NA.RA, Recruitment, selection, CSR, Policies, Discrimination, Corruption, psychometric test, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Human Capital, Equity Approach.*

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## **List of Abbreviation**

### **Abbreviation**

### **Full Meaning**

GICAM	Cameroon Employers Association
SO.NA.RA	National Oil Refinery Company
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policy
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ILM	Internal Labor Market
RBV	Resource Based View
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
HRM	Human Resource Management
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
MD	Managing Director
NEF	National Employment Fund
EOP	Equal Opportunity Policy
CPI	Corruption Perception Index

# 1 INTRODUCTION

*This Chapter will present the reader a wider background to the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the delimitation of the scope and how the results of this study can contribute to existing literature in the problem area.*

## 1.1 Background to the Study

In Cameroon, the main employment protection legislation apparatus is the Cameroon Labor Code that is bound by law No. 92/007 of August, 1992. The principle of this law gives equal opportunity to access to employment to all Cameroonians of working age irrespective of gender, religion, ethnicity etc, and protect them in all labor matters (Campbell, 2006). The labor code also has no restrictions on foreigners in as much as they are able to comply with the laws and regulations in force.

It is important to note that the labor code was introduced in the wake of harsh economic crisis plaguing the country. This was followed by the structural adjustment policies (SAP) which instituted trade liberalization as one of the solutions to the crisis. According to the Cameroon Employers' Association (GICAM) 2005 report, this situation allowed employers and the employees to negotiate terms of contracts and remuneration, resulting to situations whereby academic qualifications became a mere standard against which other variables have to be considered before an employee could be classified on a predefined professional class. Whatever the circumstance, partiality and imbalance were imminent since employers have the tendency to impose their conditions on the employees or potential job seekers in the negotiation process. Moreover, employers more or less resorted to casualization, outsourcing and temporary employment contracts, which enabled them to cut labor costs and increase their control over the labor force, (Phelan, 2009; cf. Konings, 1993).

The outcome of SAP is noted to have been characterized by an uncaring emaciating requirement with loss of employment and limited employment options to many citizens, (GICAM, 2005 Report). Generally, SAP has had very souring implications on the Cameroon labor market, the entire social policy and especially on the national employment policy of the country. The Cameroon regional and quota policy that gives reasonable proportions to all Cameroonians in the allocation of opportunities and resources of the state became controversial. Nyamnjoh (2011), remarked that the 'national cake' diminishes with the worsening economic crisis, corruption, mass misery and ethnicity, making it more elusive for the bulk of small people to claim the same benefits from their connections with the big—or the not so big—men and women of power, one can legitimately wonder just how much longer the system can continue to deflate the disaffected. Of course, as revealed by Campbell (2006), Cameroon imposes no regional balance or quota requirements for the employment of local staff in principle, but Cameroon employers are perceived to stultify the labor market through discrimination and corrupt employment practices. The high rate of unemployment and underemployment in the country justifies that most recruitment strategies are thwarted. Report from the Cameroon National Institute of Statistics (2006) reveals a 68.3% rate of underemployment in the country. This is perceived to have been motivated also by the pluralistic cultures and diverse ethnicities that constitute the country.

Cameroon has an extremely heterogeneous population, consisting of approximately 250 ethnic groups, (World mark Encyclopedia of Nations 2007).

However, in order for Cameroon companies to succeed and survive, or compete effectively in the global economy in this era of globalization, employers must be in the position to propound and practice recruitment and selection of employees in the best way, that is, without discrimination, (Stredwick, 2000). The aim of selection is to predict how likely a person is to succeed in a particular job. This prediction will be realistic if it is based on a systematic approach that is fair, unbiased, rather than on a hunch or gut feeling. As noted by Healy (1993), those involved in a good recruitment/selection process must be able to ensure that the best candidate is appointed along the observation of relevant legislation and codes of practices. The relevant codes of practice serve to promote equal opportunity in employment. If violated in the process, there is a tendency to discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of sex, marital status, race, color, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

In this tune of globalization, the Cameroon National Oil Refinery Company (SO.NA.RA) which is the focus of this research is perceived to be facing an external environment that is becoming more complex, dynamic, uncertain and competitive than ever before. It is in the light of this assumption that an investigation on how the recruitment/selection processes are conducted became an area of interest. As echoed by Thomas (2002), today's companies and their managers are exerting a lot of pressure resulting from globalization which implies that, better compensation systems, extensive training and development activities, effective recruitment/selection processes would have a significant effect on the a firm's performance, (Björkman and Xiucheng 2002). Thus, drawing from the above discussions, one is tempted to ponder on whether there are contradictions between policy and practice expressed in the recruitment and selection of employees in SO.NA.RA.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Nowadays the recruitment and selection policies of companies is more often than not highly negligible, though it is an important research area that provides valuable insights into how the labor market functions and the social reproduction of organizations (Windolf 1986). It is an ongoing perception that some companies in Cameroon have influence in the labor market in the allocation of resources. By so doing, the Cameroon labor market is being transformed into the buyer's market where companies' preferences become dominant in a manner that, discrimination in employment relation practices is interpreted as an outcome of rational decision making of formal organizations rather than the idiosyncrasies of individuals (ibid). This is assumed to have been inspired by the several ethnic groups in the country. The ethnic succession strategy has become a cultural practice. It is more often employed as a power-sharing instrument as well as a tool to divide and rule, (Nyamnjoh 2011). Appointments to government and other important political positions are made strictly across ethnic lines. This has the tendency to have infested prestigious companies as well resulting to marginalization of some categories of the employable individuals irrespective of their contingencies in human capital. In the mean time, there is a persistent media caption on the top official of SO.NA.RA soon to face the legal authorities for accountability about the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) to the South West Region where the company is located. The media also reveals that, in 2009, the President of the

Republic instructed an investigation of SONARA about the alleged marginalisation of Anglophones in this company housed in Limbe which is a typical anglophone city. Findings that were made public in 2010 showed that 80% of SO.NA.RA's sponsored development programmes do not involved development projects in the South West Region, whereas its leaders take it for granted<sup>1</sup>.

It has been a popular opinion that since the company was founded in 1976, the practice of recruitment and selection is visionary based on bias and continues to sideline certain social categories. This is an indication that the recruitment policy fails to demonstrate a CSR even in the recruitment of the immediate local people but in favor of some particular classes. Of course, this is a sharp contrast of the 1992 Cameroon Labor Code section 2 (ii) that defines work as a national duty incumbent on every able-bodied adult citizen, (Yanou, M. 2009). This provision serves not only as a legal requirement, but also gives the best opportunities for employers to get the right persons for the right jobs (Armstrong, 2006). Scholars and practitioners claim that today's companies are in the middle of a "war for talent". This implies that companies that can attract and recruit the most talented employees will be the most successful. This war for talent is based on the assumption that the employees' competence is the key for success. The recruitment process is therefore very important. Mistakes in the recruitment process can have serious consequences for companies 'survival and success. (Storey et al., 2009). Contrary to this premise and as cited above, information from the Cameroon National Institute of Statistics (2006) reveals that underemployment in the country which stands at 68.3% is a product of corruption and discriminatory practices by some employers. Recruitment policies often include issues about considering internal applications, developing existing employees, handling and processing applications in a fast and proper way, not exaggerating or making false claims in the job advertisement and not discriminating in any way (Stredwick, 2000). The high rate of underemployment in the country is an indication that most recruitment strategies are flawed.

Corruption has been identified as an important factor in the discriminatory practices that characterize the Cameroon labor market and/or employment policies. The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2009 ranked Cameroon number 146 on a scale of 180 corrupt countries. Moreover, that for 2011 ranks Cameroon 134 out of 182 countries considered in the classification. In this assessment, Cameroon obtained a score of 2.5 out of 10. The classification explains that a country whose rating is close to 10 is the least corrupt and that whose score is close to zero is the most corrupt. New Zealand is the least corrupt with a score of 9.5 out of 10, followed by Denmark, Finland and Sweden. The report noted that corruption erodes economic freedom by introducing insecurity and uncertainty into economic relationships. Lien (2002) also indicates that, there is a possibility of allocation inefficiencies in corrupt practices. He acknowledges that though empirical verification of discrimination is difficult, discrimination is a general phenomenon in competitive bribery games. It is the risk taken by some corrupt or discriminatory managers in SO.NA.RA who likely do not outsource the right people in the right places that motivate this study. Even though Cameroon has an overall legal framework for a well functioning labor market in place, discriminatory recruitment and selection

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<sup>1</sup> [www.kongossa.fr/operation-epervier/3272-operation-epervier--charles-metouk-bientot-devant-la-barre.html](http://www.kongossa.fr/operation-epervier/3272-operation-epervier--charles-metouk-bientot-devant-la-barre.html)



approaches tend to render this inflexible and inefficient hence posing a threat to broader normative and institutional framework of democratic governance thus, requiring some attention.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The general purpose of this thesis is to study the recruitment and selection strategies in SO.NA.RA. More specifically, the thesis will,

- Study the perceived effectiveness and efficiency of the recruitment and selection policy implementation in SO.NA.RA.
- Describe other intervening policies including the value and diversity policy; the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy; the Cameroon Regional Balance Policy on the decisions on recruitment and selection in SO.NA.RA.
- Appraise SO.NA.RA's sensitivity to corporate social responsibility with its local population especially in the employment of indigenous people.
- Create awareness of some measures that can help improve on the effectiveness and efficiency in recruitment and selection in SO.NA.RA and its loyalty to CSR.

The specific objectives have been formulated in order to be able to target and address various variables deemed relevant in the research.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

In order to meet the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been formulated.

- In what ways are the Recruitment and Selection Policies implementation in SO.NA.RA perceived to be effective and efficient?
- How is SO.NA.RA important to the local communities where it is located with particular attention to employment issues?

It should be noted that the first research question is meant to seek answers to implementation and the implications of the recruitment/selection policies while the second question pertains to SONARA's CSR initiatives with the local communities.

### **1.5 Expected Research Contribution**

This work will throw light on the manner in which the recruitment/selection strategies are implemented alongside the CSR initiative in SO.NA.RA. The unsatisfactory treatment of people living in the communities where oil companies operate are some of the imminent issues that relate to the increasing questions and increasing evidence of a gap between the stated intentions of business leaders (in the oil, gas and mining sectors) and their actual impact in the real world, (Frynas 2005). CSR activities of oil companies operating in such communities should be aligned to address, employment issues, environmental issues and local community issues, (ibid). This implies, the companies' presence should be able to develop a win-win relationship between their businesses and the local people.

Further, the knowledge interest is intended to reveal the implications linked to perceived inconsistencies (that is, discrimination/corruption) in recruitment and selection taken for granted by some companies in Cameroon. The results will also be consequential to the various actors involved. Results will as well be published in Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive (GUPEA) - a student website for research and cooperation. This will nevertheless serve as a collective build up to earlier studies carried out in other countries and hence, help to promote understanding of what is lacking to foster the effective and efficient functioning of the recruitment/selection policies and the CSR policies of some oil companies.

## 1.6 Delimitation of Scope

The author has decided to limit the study to the National Oil Refinery Company, SO.NA.RA - Cameroon. The focus is on the company's strategic policies in recruitment/selection and also CSR. The author actually chose to carry out an in-depth analysis of a single company, rather than analyzing many companies. Of course this delimitation is consequential to the results of the study assuming that the author's conclusion will be based on how just one company implements its recruitment/selection and CSR policies or strategies within its operational environment instead of a conclusion that involves companies in general. In which case, it may not be appropriate to make generalizations from the empirical findings. Nevertheless, the results could be valuable in the process of building knowledge.

## 1.7 Outline of the Study

**Chapter 01:** This is the *introductory* chapter. Here the research problem is discussed with its wider background; the purpose; the research questions and the expected research contributions.

**Chapter 02:** This is the *methodology* chapter. The chapter explains how the research was conducted. It begins with the research philosophy followed by the method and procedures that were used in collecting data. It describes the study area, the population, sampling size and sampling procedure, field procedure, research design, instrumentation, data collection technique and data analysis.

**Chapter 03:** This chapter presents the *theoretical framework* that forms the basis for the analysis of the empirical data and a *literature review* of the basic concepts used in the thesis.

**Chapter 04:** This is the chapter that presents the *empirical data* gathered from the field.

**Chapter 05:** This chapter presents an *analysis* of the empirical findings in relation to the research questions and relevant theories.

**Chapter 06:** This is the *conclusion* chapter. Here the research questions are answered and the limitations and contributions of the study are analyzed with a gap for further research on the subject.

## 2 METHODOLOGIES

*This chapter explains how the research was conducted. It starts with a brief definition of research, the research philosophy, the design, then followed by the method and procedures that were used in collecting data.; the population, sampling size and sampling technique, data collection, data analysis, validity/reliability, generalizability, ethical consideration and limitations.*

According to Saunders et al., (2009) research is something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic manner, thereby increasing their knowledge. It is noted that this definition captures two significant phrases: “systematic way” and “to find out things”. “Systematic” suggest that research is based on logical relationships and not just beliefs (Saunders and Thornhill, 2009). “To find out things” suggests that, there are multiple possibilities or purposes for your research. These may include describing, explaining, understanding, criticizing and analysis (ibid).

### 2.1 Research Philosophy

Armstrong (2009) argues that there are two main contrasting research philosophies in the social sciences: positivism or phenomenology. The key difference between these two dimensions arises from their different conceptions of human beings and the approach to understand their behavior (Thomas, 2004). Researchers with a positivist philosophy believe that reality is objective and external. This requires researchers to focus on fundamental laws and causality, and to reduce phenomena to their simplest elements (reductionism), formulate hypotheses and then test them. In this case, the emphasis of positivism is on quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis, (Armstrong, 2009).

On the other hand, phenomenology lays more emphasis on the meaning of phenomena instead of on the facts associated with them. Here, the researcher does not follow a reductionist approach but a holistic one as he tries to understand what is happening by covering a global picture of the event. The researcher collects and analyses evidence with the intention of using the data to develop ideas that explain the meaning of things, (ibid). The researcher believes that reality is socially constructed instead of objectively determined in which case, in the process of this approach, the research unfolds as it progresses giving room for earlier evidence to be used to indicate how to advance to the next level of collection of facts and analysis, and so on. Therefore researchers with this philosophy must try to understand different meanings people ascribe to reality (Thomas, 2004).

The research question in this study has an inductive character therefore it clearly suggest the use of the phenomenology approach. By using this perspective, the researcher get involves in what is being observed and inductively produce theoretical abstractions from a small number of cases chosen for specific reasons in order to better understand a specific situation (Lowe et al. 2002). Another reason why this approach has been chosen is the consideration that one of the objectives of the study is to provide generalized results on some suggestions that can help improve on the effectiveness and efficiency in recruitment and selection in oil companies and their sensitivity to CSR. This is drawn from the assumption that, one important characteristic of a good research is when the researcher is able to generalize the research but within stated limits. This means

attempting to extract understanding from one situation and to apply it to as many other situations as possible, (Phillips and Pugh 1987; cf. Armstrong, 2009). This henceforth, illuminates the argument that research can also be based on induction, which is the process of reaching generalized conclusions from the observation of particular instances, (Armstrong, 2009).

## **2.2 Research Design**

Taking in to consideration the nature of the research problem and the character of the research question, the research was done using an exploratory case study approach whereby qualitative data was collected using in-depth interviews. The study was based mostly on qualitative empirical material in order to elicit personal experiences and opinions from the study population. Moreover, this method is chosen because it provides a rich and detailed picture of a particular phenomenon (Hakim 2000)

### *2.2.1 Research Strategy*

To begin the process, the researcher started by searching for relevant theories and concepts within this area of research in order to have a wider knowledge that will guide and open a gap for the research. The researcher further appraised different research strategies and resolved to focus on what Yin defines as a “Case Study” approach. According to Yin (1994), a case study is an empirical investigation that studies a current phenomenon within a real life context, especially when boundaries between observable facts and context are not clearly evident. It is also the development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single “case”, or of a small number of related “cases”. The details of the design typically “emerge” during data collection and analysis (Robson, 2002). As argued by Yin (1994), the author embraces this choice because of its unique strength. It is noted for its ability to deal with a variety of evidence, documents, interviews and observations, which is what has been done in the process of the thesis.

Moreover, the research question for this study attains the criterion of a “how” question, assuming that a case study is appropriate when a “how” or “why” question is being asked about issues which the investigator has limited or no control, (ibid). As earlier mentioned, the case study has been chosen because in-depth interviews have been identified as the major source of information gathering as will be examined later in this chapter.

### *2.2.2 Selection of Case Company*

The selection of the company was based on several factors: Firstly, the author has a keen interest in the oil production industry and its socio-economic impact in the communities where they operate. In this regard, the author found it essential to locate a case company that would be appropriate for the thesis and the research questions per se.

The author has chosen SO.NA.RA secondly, because it is the only state owned oil company in Cameroon controlled by a few elites. In fact, many Cameroonians feel disillusioned to see how oil wealth fails to benefit those with the optimal competencies or the country at large while enriching some particular elites whose tenure over the control of the company is being characterized by corruption and discrimination. Moreover, the case company operates in the author’s home country that will ease access to both secondary and empirical data. It was nevertheless important for the author to contribute not only to research on recruitment and CSR

policies/strategies but also by making a contribution to an operating company- SO.NA.RA. This parodies Armstrong (2009) who argues that a case study is a description or history of an event or sequence of events in a real life setting in which case, case studies are useful ways of collecting information on the reality of organizational life and processes.

## **2.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

The population comprised of top managing personnel and minor staff of SO.NA.RA, Personnel and local employees of major contracting companies in SO.NA.RA (Fakoshipping Company and Foster Wheeler AG), heads of local authorities, and community residents who have been in their current positions for at least five years. A total of 22 participants were selected from this population. More often than not, researchers study a fraction of the population instead of everybody in the population. When this is done, conclusions may be drawn about the entire population under study provided the sample is considered representative, (Adams et al., 2007). Unlike in survey studies where random sampling (i.e. giving individuals in the population equal chances of being selected to the sample) are used regularly, this study did not find it appropriate because the selection of the various contracting companies to be included in the study was to be determined by the type of sampling technique, secondly, the research questions required respondents who must have worked in the studied company for at least five years and also those who must have lived in the communities around it for the past five years. The researcher realized those five years were accurate for these respondents to give reliable information and experience on the effectiveness and efficiency of recruitment and selection strategies in their work place and also the recognition of any practical CSR initiatives in the local areas where the company is located. As a result, the non-probability methods were deemed appropriate for the study.

Adams et al. (2007) argue that, a non-probability that conforms to certain pre-determined characteristics is referred to as purposive sampling. One of the purposive sampling approaches used by the researcher in this study is the judgment sampling technique. According to Burns & Burns (2008), when using this technique, the researcher is in the position to identify and choose the respondents deemed representative of the population. In such a situation the researcher has an advantage of using his/her prior knowledge to identify and choose respondents who are considered more reliable, (Bailey, 2004). As already mentioned above, respondents with a five years longevity either as workers or inhabitants in the area of study where considered more reliable in the study and representative of the population. In the same vein the researcher decided to include respondents from both local and foreign contracting companies in the sample. Secondly, the snowball technique was also used. Adams et al., (2007) note that when using this technique, a small number of samples are used to nominate a group that will be ready to be interviewed, and this group further nominate others and so on. The researcher decided to use this method in order to get access to respondents that were difficult to be identified, (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). In this regard, those who already participated in the study were asked to identify other potential respondents based on the pre-determined criteria of longevity at work and residence in the local communities to participate in the interview. Thus, a blend of the non probability sampling method of both the judgment and snowball techniques was used in this study. Using these two techniques, a sample size of 22 participants was considered for the interview. The sample was drawn from inside and outside the company to give the researcher an objective platform to be able to compare and understand the validity/reliability of the various

perspectives pertaining to the research questions. From SO.NA.RA (that is, within the company) 06 respondents were interviewed. These included managing personnel of administration and human resources department (Thelma), personnel of the Public Relations & Communication Department (Moges), personnel of the Legal Department (Persson), personnel of the Department of Quality, Safety, Environment and Inspection (Uchiba), a staff from the security department (Ebenitoe), a staff from the department of technical control (Mimi). The sample also included 06 staff from the contracting companies working in SO.NA.RA: personnel from Fakoshipping Company (Koge), two local staff from the Fakoshipping Company (Menyoli and Makolo); personnel of Foster Wheeler AG (Fritz), a foreign contracting company, and two local staff from Foster Wheeler AG (Kah and Davis). Respondents outside the company were: 04 local authorizes - the Mayor of the Limbe 2 Council (Bissong), a local head of Bobende Village (Ekema), a local head of Batoke village (Kombe), a local head of Mukondangue village (Lyonga); 06 respondents from the communities around SO.NA.RA: 02 residents from Batoke village two residents from Mukondangue village, two residents from Bobende village. The researcher's choice of inclusion of respondents outside the company was based on the assumption that: they represent the immediate beneficiaries of any job opportunities announced by SO.NA.RA, secondly, they are liable to the social implications that come as a result of the company' activities thus, their opinion counts in assessing the CSR initiatives of SO.NA.RA. A detailed summary is presented on table 1 below.

**Table 1.** *List of interviews conducted, 22 in total.*

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Names and Interview Positions</b>	<b>Content</b>
SONARA Sarl (04)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thelma, personnel from the department of administration and Human Resources (phone interview).</li> <li>- Moges, personnel from the department of communication and public relations (interviewed twice).</li> <li>- Uchiba, personnel from the department of safety, environment and inspection.</li> <li>- Persson personnel from the Legal department.</li> </ul>	The recruitment/selection and CSR policies and strategies from the company perspective; implications in their implementation; awareness of the socio-economic impact of activities of SO.NA.RA on local communities; awareness of EOP, corruption or discrimination in recruitment/selection in SO.NA.RA.
Local Authorities (04)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bissong, a mayor from Limbe 2 council.</li> <li>- Kombe, a local community head from Batoke village.</li> <li>- Lyonga, a local community head from Mukondangue village.</li> <li>- Ekema, a local community head from Bobende village.</li> </ul>	Their perspective about the implementation of SO.NA.RA's policies of recruitment/ selection and CSR. Benefits of CSR from local authority perspective. Level of stakeholder collaboration with SO.NA.RA

		on these policies. Verification of the social impact of SO.NA.RA on local community. Awareness of discrimination and corruption in SO.NA.RA.
Contractors (02)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Koge, personnel from Fakoshipping Company (Cameroon based).</li> <li>- Fritz, personnel from Foster Wheeler AG (Switzerland based).</li> </ul>	Awareness of CSR and level of collaboration. The impact of SO.NA.RA's recruitment/selection policies and its overall business strategies on their own policies, services and production. Awareness of discrimination and corruption in SO.NA.RA .
Community Residents (06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1<sup>st</sup> villager (taxi driver)</li> <li>- 2<sup>nd</sup> villager (trader)</li> <li>- 3<sup>rd</sup> villager ( hair dresser)</li> <li>- 4<sup>th</sup> villager (male farmer)</li> <li>- 5<sup>th</sup> villager (jobless)</li> <li>- 6<sup>th</sup> villager (female farmer)</li> </ul>	Awareness on CSR by SO.NA.RA. Impact of activities of SONARA on the socio-economic life of local communities. Awareness of discrimination and corruption in SO.NA.RA.
Local Staff (06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mimi, an administrative assistant, department of technical control (SO.NA.RA).</li> <li>- Ebenitoe, a staff from the security department (SO.NA.RA).</li> <li>- Menyoli, a diver (Fakoshipping company)</li> <li>- Makolo, a staff (Fakoshipping company).</li> <li>- Davis, a staff from the Electrical engineering sector (Foster Wheeler AG).</li> <li>- Kah, a welder (Foster Wheeler AG).</li> </ul>	Awareness and experience of discrimination and corruption in SO.NA.RA. Assessment of impact of SO.NA.RA's policies and business strategies on own companies' objectives/goals.

Figure 1. Source: Author's elaboration

## **2.4 Data Collection**

### **2.4.1 Primary and Secondary Data**

Bjorklund & Paulsson (2003) present two sources through which researchers can use to gather information in a study: First is the primary source through which the researcher elicits information for a specific study. At this instance, such data has not previously been used. The semi structured interview technique was the main technique used to gather information. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), interviews allow respondents to tell their stories in their own language giving the researcher rich descriptive details about the phenomenon, (cf. Kulik et al., 2009).

The secondary sources were also used. This is data that has been collected by other scholars and for other reasons rather than the purpose of this thesis. Secondary data was collected from articles (recruitment and selection policies, CSR policies and practices, other reports that touch on the subject), past research theses and books. The data was located mostly from the South West Regional archives, libraries, administrative records, newspaper articles and internet. Data was systematically collected in a manner that will provide answers to the research questions in a logical and coherent way.

### **2.4.2 Interview Preparation**

Patel and Davidson (2003) recommend four important preparations that are required in the interview process:

- The evaluation of the interview guide to ensure that it covers every aspect of the problem.
- The evaluation of all questions to avoid questions that may divert focus on the problem.
- Conduct a pilot study to test the reliability of the interview guide.
- Practice the interview technique and have confidence about the content of the interview.

To meet these criteria, the researcher started by reviewing as much literature as possible to increase the chances that all questions should cover the problem. Further, the functionality of the interview guide was tested through a pilot study with a Mayor from the Limbe 2 council and an employee of one of the contracting companies. The rudimentary results helped the researcher to reformulate and add some questions to increase precision and to consider not only youths but men/women living in the local communities in the study. This increased my sample size from 20 participants to 22 participants.

### **2.4.3 Interview Guide**

As could be found in appendix 01, an interview guide was established before the start of the interview to keep the researcher on track. The questions were semi structured and open ended in order to give ample space and time for the respondents to give detail illustrations of the problem from their own understanding, (Glaser and Strauss 1967; cf. Kulik et al., 2009). The follow up questions that were asked were determined by the preceding answers. This made the interview



more of a discussion. Though there was an overlapping of questions in some interview situations, the interview guide was structured according to sections A, B, C, D, E. Section A was constructed to target the Managing personnel of SO.NA.RA; Section B targeted the local authorities (The Mayors of Limbe 2 Council & the local community Chiefs); Section C targeted the foreign and local contractors; Section D targeted the local residents and section E targeted the various categories of employees across the various companies chosen in the study.

#### **2.4.4 *The Interview Process***

The approach used to decide on the choices of the selected participants to be interviewed stemmed from the reflection that, researchers should aim for a high level of saturation in the responses given by the interviewees. Trost (2005) argues that when interviewees give almost similar answers to the questions posed to them, a significant level of saturation is attained in which case, the validity of the study should be considered high. As already mentioned, the primary data has been collected by the use of semi structured interviews complemented by the non probability sampling method (the judgment and the snowball techniques). Each interview varied for an average, of between one to two hours. The major pre-determined criterion for all participants was five years longevity in their current positions either in the workforce of the various companies included in the study or as residents of the local communities around SO.NA.RA. The interviews were carried out manually, without the use of a recording device such as an audiotape. One reason for this was that the researcher experienced during his Post Graduate Diploma thesis that informants were not comfortable in the presence of a tape recorder thus, can served as a source of distraction. It was not easy to get people to talk on tape especially on a topic that dwells on corruption. However a summary of the most important and relevant responses in the interviews were written down under the specific or preceding questions. This was followed by a discussion on the interview to ensure that both the interviewee and the researcher have interpreted the responses in a similar manner. As argued by Wiedersheim et al., (1990), the risk of errors is minimized if the researcher and the interviewee carry on a second discussion over the responses provided.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

Merriam (2001) contends that in qualitative studies, researchers are the primary instruments for collecting and analyzing data. Therefore as humans, it is obvious to observe that, mistakes could be made, opportunities could be missed and personal biases could also interfere while conducting social research. In spite this observation, it is believed that this study has a solid platform to work on because the number of in-depth interviews actually reached 22 participants and the data to a greater extent corresponds and complement each other. As argued by Saunders et al., (2009), data collected can only be useful if it has been analyzed and interpreted. Before the analysis, codification, classification and the tallying of facts was done. That is, the results of the study were presented according to the various research questions that the thesis focused on. The objectives serve as salient headings in the process. In which case, results about the respondents' opinion on the recruitment and Selection strategies in SO.NA.RA were presented followed by results of SO.NA.RA's sensitivity to corporate social responsibility to the local communities around where it is located. When this was done, it became easy to analyze the company's employment and CSR approaches in relation to existing policies, the perception of stakeholders

(contractors/employees) and the perspectives of local communities (mayors/chiefs/residents) towards the company. The analysis was done within the theoretical and conceptual framework elaborated in the literature review with the aim of seeking answers to the research questions.

## **2.6 Validity and Reliability**

The interview guide was constructed to obtain a systemic coverage of the topic, with a keen focus on the general and specific objectives in order to ensure content validity. Saunders et al., (2009) reveal that validity is the degree of accuracy to which data collection method measures what it intended to measure or the extent to which research findings are about what they claim to be about. To increase validity, the interview questions were framed in a very clear and concise manner to make sure each question measures each variable at a time. Also, the open/ended questions gave respondents the chance to give detail responses in their own words. This was supported by preceding questions during the interview and overview discussions at the end of every interview to minimize any threats of misunderstanding or wrong interpretation. Moreover, major concepts in the questions were defined to avoid misinterpretations by the participants. Reliability aims to demonstrate that the data gathered if repeated will give the same results. The goal when discussing reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in the case study. The researcher endeavored to avoid subjectivity in the research by maintaining a high level of consistency during the interview. This was to be ensured by the establishment of the interview guide found in appendix 01. The interview questions were reframed and some were added because of the lessons from the pilot study. Saunders et al., (2009) notes that, bias is an important threat to reliability. Therefore to increase objectivity both to the researcher and interviewees, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed.

## **2.7 Generalizability**

Since this research was carried out on SO.NA.RA with its specific features, it may not be appropriate to generalize the results to other oil companies, because this can influence the construct validity in a negative way. According to Yin (1994) construct validity as one of the criteria for judging the quality of a research design is based on establishing correct operational measures by the use of multiple sources of data collection. Further, Saunders et al., (2009) argue that researchers who use the non-probability sampling method in their research cannot claim that the results of their findings could be representative for the whole population. Notwithstanding these assertions, O’Leary (2010) notes that such results could still be useful in a broader sense based on the premise of “lessons learned” that may likely to be applicable in different settings or population.

## **2.8 Ethical Considerations**

The interviewees were informed about the objectives and aim of the study and were given the aptitude to participate in the research and also the ability to withdraw later if not comfortable with the proceedings. The company (SO.NA.RA) and persons who participated in this study were guaranteed anonymity by the researcher. Fictitious names were ascribed to them and their statements or quotations in the research was to be used with due respect. Respondents were

nevertheless given the option to read through the final manuscript before presentation of results and/or submission of final thesis.

## **2.9 Limitations**

A tape recorder was seen as one of the factors affecting access to some managers since most top officials in Cameroon are believed not to feel comfortable knowing that their words are being taped. Taping was also seen by the researcher to influence their responses considering the prevailing political climate in the company at the time. Another shortcoming was that most of the company documents were in French. The potential problem when translating is errors such as misinterpretations. It was also noticed that the fluency of some francophone managers was not optimal. There was little room for an overview discussion with the respondents who were interviewed on the phone. As earlier mentioned, the discussion that followed the interviews was intended to ensure that both the interviewees and the researcher have interpreted the responses in the same way. Moreover, limited access to the company and nominated respondents caused the study to take a longer time than expected. In the first instance, it was realized that the researcher came from Gothenburg University which is not among the institutions that have signed a research and cooperation agreement with SO.NA.RA. Secondly, identified participants to the study were not very certain about their calendar of activities hence their availability for the interview, leading to a lack of a precise work plan for the researcher. This was a major cause for some of the interviews to be carried out on telephone.

### 3 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORIES

*In order to place this work in context and attain the purpose of the study, it is important to review existing literature on links to previous research on the subject area and some concepts that are of relevance to the thesis.*

Boxall, Purcell and Wright, (2007) highlight five different questions an organization has to answer to have an effective recruitment strategy in order to pursue its survival and success. Those questions are “Whom to recruit?”, “Where to recruit?”, “What recruitment sources to use?”, “When to recruit?” and “What message to communicate?” The notion of effectiveness in this study relates to the manner by which SO.NA.RA implements its employment policies. The essence is to understand whether such policies are applied appropriately in the way they have been designed. What is of interest here is that if such policies are contravened in the process of implementation it implies that the recruitment and selection of candidates in the studied company is likely to be biased. Boxall and Purcell (2008) present the best fit and best practice approaches as a two way process to be used by firms in order to connect their human resource strategy with their business strategy. Efficiency on the other hand reveals whether the planned objectives of the policies bring forth the anticipated returns to the business. The bone of contention here is to establish a matrix of the policy objectives and the intended outcome. James et al., (1979) state that effectiveness is measured in terms of achieving and with the use of limited resources. They emphasize that; the concept of efficiency must be added to that of effectiveness. Though these two concepts are related, they however have some common differences. To understand the meaning of effective performance it is realized that achieving desirable ends is necessary for effective performance whereas the efficient use of resources is necessary but not sufficient for effectiveness.

Micheal et al., (1979) hold that effectiveness is easy to understand when it is contrasted with efficiency. They claim that, effectiveness underscores the long-range continuing nature of management meanwhile efficiency is considered a short term measure on how well an organization uses its resources. Efficiency measures are used to see whether organizations are meeting their short-term targets in which case, efficiency is considered a short measure. It compares the input or cost directly with the output or benefits (cf. Etzioni, 1964). Measuring effectiveness and efficiency raises several thorny questions. When a company has a goal that is short and concrete, it is comparatively easy to measure effectiveness. For example, in cases of two companies, one whose goal is to construct a canal linking the Red and Mediterranean seas and another whose goal is to build a tunnel linking Britain and France, it is true that the former was effective while the latter was not. If the organizational goal is a continuous one, measurement is already a problematic, (Etzioni, 1964). This is the motivation behind the purpose of studying the recruitment strategy of SO.NA.RA that is likely influenced by several factors for instance, discrimination and corruption.

Corruption is a complex phenomenon that needs to be understood from varying perspectives. Treisman (2000) noted that corruption is a contributory factor for the failure of most developing countries to develop and that, results from recent studies show that there is a correlation between higher perceived corruption and lower investment and growth. Stanley et al., (2008) argue that as an abuse of public power for private benefit through bribery, nepotism, embezzlement etc, and

corruption has become a global phenomenon that affects nearly all aspects of social and economic life. It is known to weaken the institutional foundation of a country that is fundamental for economic growth (World Bank, 2000). The World Bank also notes that people in poverty are the most reliant on social security and the least capable of paying the extra costs that are needed for bribery and fraud thus, making them the most affected victims of corruption. It is important to note that companies that practice corruption are most likely to experience an increase in project cost. In addition to such financial costs and loss of business opportunities; the brand of the company, the morale of its staff and its reputation also suffer, (Transparency International, 2009a). Discrimination and corruption are visible in Cameroon and are perceived variables that give Cameroon employers the tendency to have an influence or control over and causing imbalances in the labor market.

Both nationally and internationally there are employment laws that influence the way recruitment or employment should be carried out. The 2009/2000 report from the ministries of Economy and Finance recognizes that the employment situation in Cameroon remains a great concern, and reveals that unemployment affects more than 25% of the active population, particularly the youth in urban areas. Amidst this, Cameroon has a Labor Code (Labor Code N° 92/007 of August 1992) which is the main employment protection legislation machinery that plays a major role in regulating employment practices. In terms of institutional developments, the government has also adopted a National Employment Policy Bill. To strengthen this bill, an employment observatory has been set up with the objective of facilitating employment and the optimal utilization of human resources to make sure that the process is fair and helps to prevent discrimination.<sup>2</sup> This could be a way forward as Windolf (1986) argues that discrimination begins during the first stages of the recruitment process. Windolf's (1986) article on "*Recruitment, Selection, and Internal Labor Markets in Britain and Germany*" touches on the major theme of this study and has been identified as a blueprint for the discussion of the empirical findings since it actually gives a holistic explanation of the problem area through an explanation of the various recruitment strategies that firms used to handle complex labor markets. The typology is limited to the recruitment strategies per se because this is what lay the foundation for sourcing employees and determine the second phase which is the selection stage.

According to Windolf (1986), the choice of a particular recruitment strategy by a firm is specific to the resources available to the organization at hand and its environmental dynamics. The labor market power of companies is determined in relation to local competition and is defined as the degree of choice a company can exercise in deciding upon a particular recruitment strategy. Windolf as well argues that the recruitment process usually begins by defining the profile of the ideal candidate which implies the applicant who will best fit the job. Sometimes the profile could be more or less clearly defined in terms of formal education, sex or age. He points out that a narrow definition of the ideal candidate in terms of age 30-35, male, native born or otherwise excludes many potential applicants (women or older workers) who might be capable of doing the job. It is at these first stages of the recruitment process that discrimination actually begins (ibid). Firms may advertise the vacancy or they may restrict recruitment to the internal labor market (ILM) or to friends or relatives of employees. The use of such closed recruitment channels based on ILM or social

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<sup>2</sup> [www.gpn.org](http://www.gpn.org)

networks of employees enable only a small group of potential applicants to have access. In which case, the use of these channels discriminates against outsiders who have no close connections with the firms' workforce (Manwaring 1984; cf. Windolf 1986). Windolf however reveals that the choice of a particular recruitment channel represents the second selective stage of the recruitment process meanwhile the third stage implies that applicants have to pass through a set of *'filters'* such as application forms, reading, writing, personality tests, and interviews with personnel and first-line managers. The interview is the most important filter built into the procedure and at this juncture, discrimination is most difficult to influence or control because it operates in an informal way against the social background and the whole life-style of an applicant.

Windolf further argues that the second variable that influences the recruitment strategy used by firms is their organizational intelligence. Organizational intelligence is an organization's ability to handle complex labor markets. This means the capacity of firms to use professional knowledge, to gather and process information and to devise complex labor market strategies. Some firms survive only by muddling through while some establish professional departments to control external labor markets and to devise strategies for the utilization of manpower. Windolf points out that the organizational intelligence of firms is not identical to the presence of a personnel department. For example in some German firms, trained work councils use their rights of codetermination to dominate the personnel policy of the firms. Therefore, the recruitment strategy of a firm should be regarded as the result of the bargaining processes instead of unilateral regulation.



Figure 2, Adapted from Windolf (1986)

The third variable that influences the recruitment strategy has to do with a description of the technical complexity of the product and the process of production. However, this variable is not used systematically because recruitment strategies are only marginally influenced by technical constraints. Technology is used only to differentiate the autonomous strategy from the innovative strategy (Windolf 1986). It could be seen how the various dimensions are systematically combined in figure 3.

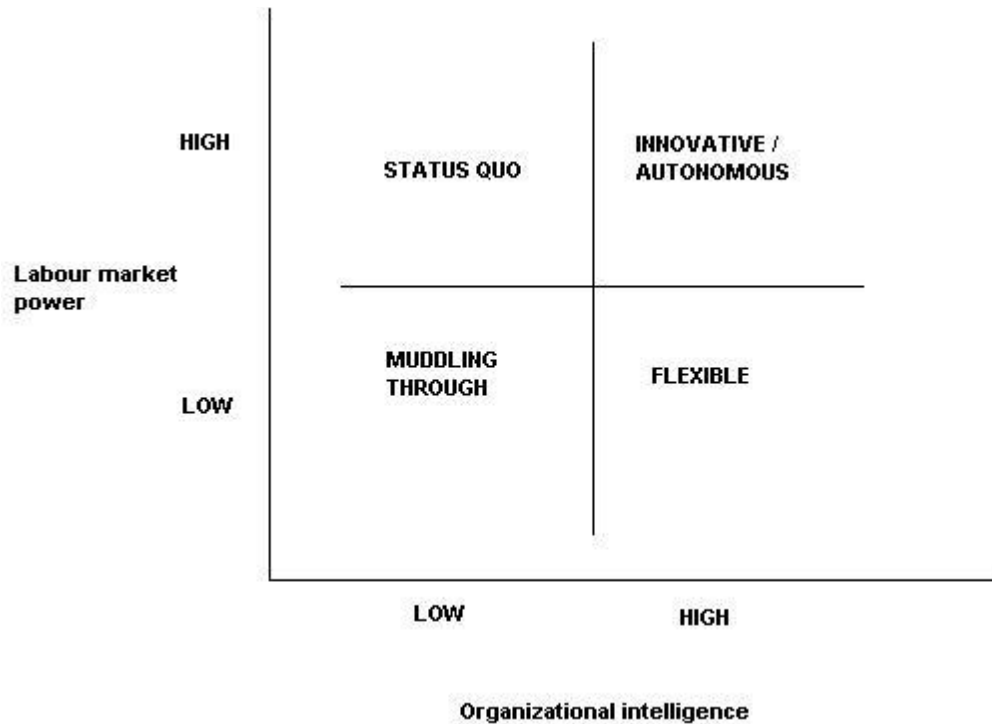


Figure 3, Adapted from Windolf (1986)

*The status quo strategy* according to this classification focuses on homogeneous selection. The firm has resources but does not use them wisely in relation to other more successful firms. They search for the same categories of workers all the time and do not care to challenge their existing recruitment strategy. A change in technology or job requirement has little or no impact on their recruitment practices. Windolf reveals that the most important selection criterion here is being recommended by a worker of the firm and that there are three basic ways through which newcomers can enter the firm. For example, production workers could be recruited directly from the waiting queues of friends and relatives, craftsmen and clerical workers are recruited from the pool of apprentices/trainees (school leavers have to have some 'connections' with the firm to get an apprenticeship), whereas engineers and professionals are most often appointed by the headquarters.

*The innovative strategy* uses all types of channels such as newspapers, PR programmes on campus, 'head hunters' or employment agencies, and social networks, and search for different categories of workers or "innovators" from a heterogeneous pool of applicants in their recruitment process. They are very careful in their recruitment, which aims to find the best and most innovative candidates. This ideal type is based on the assumption that the internal potential for innovation is insufficient to be in consonance with the firm's ability to change its technology, product as well as customers. In which case, the firm attempts to buy innovative human capital. Some firms introduce specific requirements at an earlier stage when advertising the vacancy. This is done in order to restrict the number of potential applicants; otherwise the costs of selection would greatly increase. (For instance, the result could be that only university graduates are eligible to apply), (Windolf, 1986).

*The autonomous strategy* is a very stringent, organized recruitment process whereby the recruiting firms have pre-defined recruiting criterion. Windolf argues that this is fairly similar to the standard

procedures of personnel policy described in standard textbooks. In tight labor markets such firms are in the front of the line and are able to cream off the potentially best candidates since they are at the front of the queue of employers in the labor market. In his work, Windolf (1986) differentiated the innovative and the autonomous strategies by means of technical complexity of the product. A certain aspect of change and renewal is also implicit in the innovative strategy thus making the autonomous strategy, put simple, more of a business as usual firm in terms of recruitment, where protocol is to be followed and little competition on the labor market is experienced. It is noteworthy that autonomous firms have the tendency of using very specific recruitment channels. For instance when it concerns unskilled workers, they go to the job centre, whereas skilled workers are reached through advertisements in local papers. Jobs for experts like experienced engineers or auditors are advertised in professional papers. Employees who apply through social networks are frequently rejected and told to go to the Job Centre. Windolf reveals that, the company refuses to become involved in any type of 'nepotism'. The autonomous firm ignores this substitution ability of workers. It defines job requirements very precisely and is seldom prepared to compromise on characteristics considered as 'essential'.

*The Muddling through strategy* is recognized by its less strategic thinking with unsophisticated recruitment and selection processes. Organizations that practice this approach are often small firms with scarcer resources and are more likely to experience major problems when the labor market is tight.

*The flexible strategy* is recognized and adopted by small firms or medium size enterprises with relatively scarce resources and which are forced to adapt changing environmental conditions. Windolf recognizes that it is hard to differentiate the muddling through from the flexible strategy. Nevertheless, flexible and muddling-through companies are all believed to be responsive to environmental dynamics and also capable of adapting their structure to the current demand and supply relationships in the market. But he points to the degree of organizational intelligence and hints that a flexible strategy can be adopted by firms that, arguably, are more inclined to think strategically.

In the Cameroon context, companies or state corporations that more or less attempt to adopt any of these strategies in their recruitment endeavors are obliged to observe the principle of regional balance. The regional balance policy objective strives to strengthen and promote equal opportunities to all Cameroonians in all spheres of life in the distribution of the country's resources vis a vis the numerous ethnicities or the pluralistic character of the entire nation. In other words, it is a policy that was instituted by the government of Cameroon to ensure proportional benefits or representation of Cameroonian citizens in the allocation of the country's resources and opportunities respectively. This was a principle that was established basically on demographic foundations.

The policy of regional balance and quotas has been an informal practice for several years. It was formalized by decree No. 82/407 of 07/09/1982 and by order No. 010467/MFP/DC from 04/10/1982. This decree was signed by the Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms. The policy is not being updated despite a steady and upward increase in population. Moreover, the principle has become a permanent defense to merit. In which case, critics suggest a return to the devices and mechanisms of upstream regulation that will ensure social justice and



maintain equal opportunity for all regardless of ethnicity.<sup>3</sup> The bias that has recently infested the demographic foundation of this policy is among the factors that qualify the country as being corrupt as evident in the high rate of underemployment in the workforces of many companies in the country.

However, according to Transparency International, (2009a) the inclusion of an anti-corruption program in the overall business strategy of companies proves to lower the risk of suffering from a corruption incident by 50%. Organizations are noted of spending large sums of money on reforms and CSR programs and environmental issues. The fight against corruption has remained a forgotten social issue for companies. Nevertheless The Merck Foundation suggests that anti-corruption efforts should be incorporated into existing business models, because it is a strategic corporate social responsibility (Mahmud et al., 2009). CSR over the years has faced a plethora of definitions. Nevertheless, what most of the definitions do agree on is the overall “doing good” for: employees, local community, and also the environment. It is noticed that “Stakeholders” are frequently mentioned in the definitions of CSR (Blowfield & Murray 2008). It is deemed appropriate to consider a few of the various approaches to the definition of CSR. According to Maon et al., (2008) CSR is a stakeholder concept that extends beyond the organization’s boundaries and is driven by an ethical understanding of the organization’s responsibility for the impact of its business activities, thus, seeking in return society’s acceptance of the legitimacy of the organization. The European Commission looks at CSR as ‘a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.’ As Mohr, Webb & Harris, (2001) put it; this means that a socially responsible company is committed to minimizing any harmful effects of its operations and maximizing its beneficial effects on society. Boxall et al., (2007) point out that: ‘While HRM does need to support commercial outcomes (often called “the business case”), it also exists to serve organizational needs for social legitimacy.’ This implies that exercising social responsibility that is being concerned for the interests or wellbeing of workers and doing so ethically with regard to the needs of the people in the organization and the community. In which case, organizations should observe as a basic requirement in the treatment of people equally in terms of the opportunities for employment, learning and development (Armstrong 2009).

The CIPD, in *Making CSR Happen: the contribution of people management* (Redington, 2005) puts more emphasis on CSR in the workplace and defines it as: ‘The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large.’(cf. Armstrong 2009). CSR was further justified by the CIPD, (2007b) as a relevant and important HR activity because: HR is responsible for the key systems and processes underpinning effective delivery. Through HR, CSR can be given credibility and aligned with how businesses run. CSR could be integrated into processes such as the employer brand, recruitment, appraisal, retention, motivation, reward, internal communication, diversity, coaching and training” (ibid).

In an empirical study on CSR conducted in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria, Frynas (2005) notices that in extreme cases, the recruitment of new graduates and the retention of existing staff

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<sup>3</sup> [www.icicemac.com/actualite/11120/equilibre-regional-une-insulte-permanente-au-merite](http://www.icicemac.com/actualite/11120/equilibre-regional-une-insulte-permanente-au-merite).

has been affected. He also acknowledges that, the implications of CSR must as well be understood from a much broader context of international development because CSR is now a topic of advocacy among policy makers as an alternative route to the public delivery of development; therefore it should not be seen only through the lens of the “business case”. Frynas further argues that activities of CSR should be able to recognize employment, environmental and community issues. Oil companies should engage in social investment in the localities where they operate in order to obtain competitive advantage. Such firms have the tendency to be favored by government in the award of oil and gas concessions. Secondly, social investments allow them to maintain a stable work environment. For instance in the Niger Delta, community protest has halted oil operations. In which case, development projects are often initiated as a way of buying the local communities’ agreement to allow firms to go on with their commercial operations. It should be recalled here that during exploration for oil, potential environmental damage abound. These include the clearance of land which can lead to a long lasting permanent lost of vegetation, drilling activities which release drilling fluid into the ecosystem, leaking pipes or other emissions from the flaring of gas which is a by-product from oil production. Thirdly, social investments enhance the management of external perceptions and also keep employees happy. This is related mostly to expatriate staff in developing countries who may feel disappointed seeing how oil wealth fails to benefit a country as a whole while enriching a country’s elite. The notion for companies to tailor their work practices to their strategic and environmental contingencies as revealed by Bilberry et al., (2005) could be substantiated by an understanding of the ramifications surrounding CSR in organizational setups.

### **3.1 Theories**

*The following theoretical frameworks are considered to form the basis for the analysis of the empirical data.*

#### **3.2 The Human Capital Theory**

*“People and their collective skills, abilities and experience, coupled with their ability to deploy these in the interests of the employing organization, are now recognized as making a significant contribution to organizational success and also constituting a significant source of competitive advantage”. (Armstrong & Baron 2002; cf. Armstrong, 2006).*

This is the premise in the human capital theory. It underlines that people possess innate abilities, behavior and personal energy and these elements make up the human capital they bring to their work, (Davenport 1999; cf. Armstrong, 2006). It is indeed the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value. That is why the focus has to be on the means of attracting, retaining and developing the human capital. Armstrong (2009) explains that, individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skill (human capital) and create intellectual capital. Their knowledge is further enhanced by the interactions between them (social capital) and generates the institutionalized knowledge which organizations possess (organizational capital). Davenport (1999) comments that: *People possess innate abilities, behaviors’ and personal energy and these elements make up the human capital they bring to their work. And it is they, not their employers, who own this capital and decide when, how and where they will contribute it. In other words,*

*they can make choices. Work is a two-way exchange of value, not a one-way exploitation of an asset by its owner.* It is indeed the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value, which is why the focus has to be on means of attracting, retaining, developing and maintaining the human capital they represent, (Armstrong, 2009). The human capital theory considers people as assets and stresses that the investment in people by organizations will bring worthwhile returns. Armstrong points out clearly that the human capital theory is closely linked to the Resource Based View (RBV) of firms by Barney (1991).

### **3.3 The Resource Based View of Firms**

The Resource Based View suggests that sustainable competitive advantage is attainable when firms have a human resource pool which cannot be imitated or substituted by rivals. According to the Resource Based View, firms should constantly evaluate their workforce to ensure that they have the right people with the right skills in the right places to ensure sustained competitive advantage, (Barney, 2001). A major part of any firm's strength or weakness stem from the caliber of the people employed and the quality of their working relationships. Identifying what is most valuable and protecting it with "barriers to imitation" is at the heart of resource base thinking.

In relative terms Boxall (1996, 1998) reveals that firms which recruit and retain exceptional individuals have the capability of generating human capital advantage. But he nonetheless notes (1996, 1999) that a difference should be established between 'human capital advantage' and 'human process advantage'. The former results from employing people with competitively valuable knowledge and skills, much of it tacit. The latter, however, follows from the establishment of difficult to imitate, highly evolved processes within the firm, such as cross-departmental cooperation and executive development. In which case, the use of the human resource management systems are necessary for firms to gain a competitive advantage as also argued by Sparrow et al., (2002) that, technology and capital can be acquired by most firms any time, for a price, but it is not easy to acquire a ready pool of highly qualified and motivated employees. Thus, in order to be differentiated, the companies need to be very careful with the recruitment and selection process. The Company's HR practices would therefore need to emphasize "selecting highly skilled individuals". Companies should consider recruitment as a key tool to achieve the overall business goal because according to Boxall & Purcell (2008), the new employee is always active, ready to learn new things and easy to adapt to the new environment. It is better for them to find the right person directly from the recruitment process than having them trained later because training and development can be quite costly. This is one case of how the HR strategy fits with the competitive strategy. Catano et al., (2010) stress that, employers must aspire to hire applicants who possess the knowledge, skills, abilities or other attributes (KSAOs) required to successfully performing the job most effectively. To them, recruitment, screening and selection procedures should yield the best qualified candidates within the context of agreed-upon equity programs.

### 3.4 Equity Approach

The Equity Approach was identified relevant for the researcher to be able to define SO.NA.RA as an equal opportunity company or not. For companies to strive to adapt their equal opportunity policies (EOP) to their recruitment and selection programs, Straw (1989) identified three levels of equal opportunity policies:

- i) Equal opportunity as equal chance (non discriminatory)
- ii) Equal opportunity as equal access (fair procedures)
- iii) Equal opportunity as an equal share (outcomes and positive action).

Healy (1993) further provides a typology of organizations according to their approach to equal opportunity. Negative organizations are those that have no knowledge of EOP and also no knowledge of legislative requirements. This is based on the assumption that the organization does not discriminate whereas they might consciously discriminate. Minimalist/Partial organizations are those with espoused EOP. Here, equal opportunity has a low priority or profile focus on informality as the method to management; Complaint organizations take a more conscious and professional approach to EOP and fulfills legal obligations; comprehensive organizations have a dynamic approach to EOP but will have more of the features of the complaint organizations.

However, the expectation is that, this equity approach should be implemented in a way to promote the organization by making it a desirable workplace for all future employees. This implies an appropriate application of the diversity policies. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development - CIPD (2011) factsheet on *Good Employment Practices* and diversity management in the workplace argues that, organizations should ensure that recruitment and selection processes are fair and diversity friendly. They should be careful in drafting advertisements in a manner that will avoid discrimination and stereotyping through either language or images and should aim to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds. Organizations should strive to operate transparent and consistent appraisal and performance management processes. They should have clear career pathways including promotion and training opportunities for all categories of employees. For this to be feasible, organizations should be able to create a culture of respect and dignity of all employees through effective implementation of well designed policies and procedures which support both individual and business needs. Secondly, the fostering of respect to realize different perspectives matter, and that diversity is everyone's responsibility. Organizations should make *the business case* for diversity be seen as an opportunity and strength, rather than a threat.

Furthermore, management should think inclusively when designing diversity policies and procedures to ensure they are transparent, fair and address different needs and also make sure that there are continuous checks to make sure that policies and practices are bias free and working across the organization. This will help to enhance the effectiveness in the practice of such policies. In his study of a large manufacturing company, Omanović (2009) notices that diversity management does not only entail the attitude of organizations to welcome many different "types" of participants because there is likelihood for contradictions to occur in the

production of diversity especially when conflicting or opposite ideas and interest meet. In which case, such controversies or tensions cannot be resolved through the elimination of one side of the interest in diversity. Therefore, it is important to take cognizance of the process through which different ideas or interest are socially produced and maintained in an organization. However, what is important to note here is that managing diversity does not entails a focus on appreciating, leveraging or even understanding the concept itself, but it is a way to obtain from a heterogeneous workforce the same commitment, productivity, quality and profits that organizations obtain from their homogenous workforces, (Thomas 1990; cf. Omanović 2009).

Assuming that the organizations of today are constantly changing, it is essential therefore to have employees that are willing to change, adapt to new ways of work and always ready to learn new things. Also, because of the changing forces in the labor market, it is important to look for people with core values that correspond with the organizations. As envisioned by Boxall & Purcell (2008), the fitness of HR strategies and the organization of work and handling workers in a proper way which is the basic premise in the best fit or the contingency theory is what organizations should strive to achieve.

## 4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 Area of Study

SO.NA.RA is based in Cape Limbola. It was created in 1976, and inaugurated on 16 May 1981 as a refining company to refine oil and its derivatives (diesel, petrol, kerosene, bitumen, butane gas). The company has the capacity of producing about two million tons of fuel per annum and sells to the national and international markets. SO.NA.RA employs over 700 workers. It is seated in Mukondange village in Limbe subdivision which is the capital of the Fako Division of the South-West Region of Cameroon. It lies between latitude 3° 05' N and 4° 05' N and longitude 9° 29' E and 9° 06' E. This area is a coastal region that constitutes approximately 50.5 km of Atlantic Ocean coastline to the southwest. The subdivision consists of more than 25 villages with an estimated population of 224,418 inhabitants, (Neba, 1999) and a surface area of 248.6 square kilometers with the City of Limbe being the capital. It is bordered in the North and North-East by Buea and Tiko subdivisions respectively. It shares boundary to the west with Idenau subdivision. It is mainly characterized by equatorial climate and a rainy and dry season every year (Ngwa et al., 1987; cf. Ngwa et al., 2001). The rainy season begins in March and ends in October, with rain peaks usually occurring between July and August, having an annual rainfall average of 2000mm and peak average rainfall of 3000mm.





Figure 4. The National oil Refinery Company (SO.NA.RA) Source: [www.limbecity.org/son.htm](http://www.limbecity.org/son.htm)

Information for this thesis was collected under the two thematic areas of the research that seek to address the research questions: SO.NA.RA's recruitment strategies and implementation and SO.NA.RA's sensitivity to CSR (with particular attention to employment issues) with the local communities where its operations are carried out. Also to note is the fact that, all the data to be presented here corroborate the research objectives.

In total, the interviews were carried out with 22 respondents. 04 of the respondents were personnel managers from SO.NA.RA, 04 representatives of local authorities, 02 personnel from the contracting companies, 06 community residents and 06 workers from the three companies selected in the sample. All the respondents indicated that they have been in their current positions for at least 05 years. 06 of the respondents were not Cameroonians, 04 were French Cameroonians, and 12 were Anglophone Cameroonians.

## **4.2 Respondents opinions about SONARA's Recruitment Strategies and Implementation**

It was decided to present the results in reflection to the research sub questions that the study focused on. Data under this theme was collected by first applying the five different questions suggested by Boxall, Purcell and Wright, (2007) which organizations have to answer to have an effective recruitment strategy so as to ensure survival and success. These questions are: "Whom to recruit?", "Where to recruit?", "What recruitment sources to use?", "When to recruit?" and "What message to communicate?"

**4.2.1** If we start with the first question of *whom should SO.NA.RA recruit?* The responses distributed fairly among the personnel who believe that identifying those with the desired competencies either from within or outside the company forms the cornerstone of the hiring process. Thelma from the HR department substantiated that: "...*outside means anywhere in the world irrespective of sex or other variables because what the company counts on is a befitting personality and the needed competencies of the candidates that is why more often, we prefer*

*young graduates at the base level entry positions*". This quotation presents SO.NA.RA as an equal opportunity company that thinks strategically when hiring especially as it minimizes cost by giving credence to young graduates who more or less may not require intensive training. The human resource personnel underlined that while middle level vacancies (senior administrators, technical and junior executive positions) are often filled internally, the state appoints the managing director through a presidential decree. The newspapers and radio are used to attract lower position workers like the fire fighters.

**4.2.2** Following the second question of *where should SO.NA.RA recruit?* Most of the responses reveal that SO.NA.RA recruits from within the company, or in and out of Cameroon. Respondents argue that most special duties are carried out by contractors who are experts in their specific fields and who employ their own experts based on given assignments. Thelma stated that: "...scarce, high quality talent is recruited from abroad for example; the director of administration and human resources....or a multinational company like Total. We only do our best in the quality control". Here, Thelma throws more emphasis on the equal opportunity character in the manner in which recruitment is conducted in the company plus an evidence of a value for diversity by illustrating with a few examples.

**4.2.3** In the third question about *what recruitment sources SO.NA.RA uses*, a wide range of opinions expressed by respondents, reveal that SO.NA.RA decides on which sources to use depending on the position and skill needed. However, the major sources are internal or external sources. In the words of Thelma; "...Sometimes we advertise jobs in our yearly magazine or intranet for our existing employees whom we already trust depending on the timing. More recently, the National Employment Fund has become our major external source among other headhunters. Here, there is 'no man-know-man'" (discrimination). The use of such external actors in hiring employees according to this respond goes to project SO.NA.RA as objective because such headhunters are neutral in identifying and selecting the required skills on behalf of the company.

**4.2.4** Following the fourth question of *when to recruit?* Most of the respondents reveal that recruitment is done when there is the need. Persson from the legal department cited that; "*Seven months ago we employed 60 youths when we were about to expand by creating new units and storage facilities*". From their various views, it was realized that recruitment actually takes place when a vacancy comes out or when management needs a temporary cover for instance when a worker is sick or takes leave. What is important is that time is taken to consider whether it is appropriate to recruit to the same position, on the same scale and in the same structure.

**4.2.5** Drawing from the fifth question of *what message to communicate?* The responses of respondents were controversial. Moges from the Public Relations and Communication Department pointed out that; "*What we communicate is specific to the talent we are searching for and our message guarantees fairness in the recruitment and selection processes*". According to Thelma, the initial impression given by SO.NA.RA to applicants is very crucial for the success of the recruitment and selection especially when experienced individuals are difficult to be attracted. Therefore, the message is constructed such that it clearly explains what task, qualifications, skills, experience are peculiar to do the job. In Thelma's own words; "*We do it such that the job posting encourages self selection and does not discriminate. This means that*



*the advert must contain the post title, post number, the salary, benefits or allowances, key duties, skills and experience, type and duration of contract, closing date, interview date, contact address of the company and some others...*” However, all the personnel interviewed under this theme acknowledged that SO.NA.RA offers several types of contracts and this is often communicated when advertising jobs.

#### **4.3 Respondents opinions about the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Recruitment and Selection strategy in SO.NA.RA.**

To find out how the personnel can account for the effectiveness/efficiency of the company’s current recruitment/selection strategy, a big part of the respondents said that the various types of contracts communicated when advertising vacancies are usually temporary contracts, fixed terms, casual and permanent contracts depending on their budget, needs or continuity and this is one strategy for the company to be more efficient. Thelma with a long experience from the HR department argued that; *“For us to be efficient, we need to get the results that we want in time and space through our people. Most often, we outsource temporary workers or at times contractors to meet project deadlines. When we do this we get worthwhile returns which can be associated to our effective and efficient use of resources”*. Moreover, SO.NA.RA’s effectiveness could also be measured on how the company plans and execute policies. Moges on his part contended that; *“I believe we are actually effective since we do observe the basic principles of the labor code, not to talk of other policies like gender, diversity or the quotas and regional balance that we all know of in nearly all recruitment arrangements. We try to make sure there is a ‘fit’ of choices in the overall business goal”*. What is important to note in these responses is that the company tries to be strategic by being efficient and effective. It appears to have adopted a tendency of minimizing cost in all areas of activity and also ensures that all decisions are in alignment with its missions and vision.

#### **4.4 Respondents opinions about SONARA’s Employment Practice and CSR to the local communities where its operations are carried out.**

To get a general opinion about the concept of CSR, respondents were first asked if they think that SO.NA.RA has an obligation to be socially responsible in hiring local residents and to contribute to a better society and environment. All respondents thought that SO.NA.RA has such an obligation. Moges acknowledged that even though SO.NA.RA is supposed to be socially responsible, from his imagination, there is no such policy existing in the company despite pressures from some NGOs. He noted that it is the state that determines decisions on CSR through the city councils. The city councils collect revenues around and give budgets to the local councils to run their affairs. He however noted that: *“What we must understand in Cameroon is that, he who plays the piper, dictates the tune....the government decides what funds to be allocated in the public relations budget in all state owned corporations, for this reason SO.NA.RA has no funds allocated as of now for local community projects”*. From this opinion, Cameroon represents a system that is governed by a very centralized and authoritarian regime wherein local people do not have a say in decisions that affect their own destiny. The responses that were gotten from the personnel of the company were not complementary because some of them pointed that in Bobende village, SO.NA.RA paid cash and provided a new resettlement

area for those whose houses were demolished during the company's expansion program. Persson added that SO.NA.RA also offers schools, potable water and employment opportunities. In her words: "...Those who do not get jobs here are those who lack the required skills....more to that, at the moment SO.NA.RA is building a modern pavilion near the Regional hospital Limbe to serve the people of this region and others". This opinion expresses concrete reality that SO.NA.RA provides social amenities to the people but also tries to take precaution not to hire the wrong people that may jeopardize its competitive strategy among other companies. When asked whether some indigenous people currently work in SO.NA.RA or related contractors? The responses varied among them. Moges, says that: "I cannot really specify but what we practice is that we give the chance to everyone who has interest when the need arises". Uchiba, another respondent from the company revealed that: "Those who complain may be those who lack the required skills. We do understand that many youths who have gone to school studied but general education and so have no technical skills. SO.NA.RA needs skilled labor and so should not be blamed. Many youths who have a chance to work here are employed as drivers, security guards even though having high qualifications in other fields". The issue of efficiency, effectiveness and strategic fitness has been over emphasized by most of the top level managers in SO.NA.RA. The lack of appropriate qualifications as echoed in this quotation could be a repelling factor of employing from the local communities. On the other hand, Lyonga, a respondent from the local authorities said that: "...in the area of jobs, SO.NA.RA promised the chiefs to always give two names to be selected when an opportunity comes up but since then we have never been informed of any job vacancy. I know this is because of tribalism that is strengthened by the top ranking officials to favor only the 'Bassa tribe' and the francophone Cameroonians". ("Bassa" is a privilege tribe in Cameroon meanwhile francophone Cameroonians constitutes 4/5 of the total population whereas anglophones make up 1/5). When further asked whether respondents think that the presence of SO.NA.RA in the South West Region as a whole reduces local unemployment? Kombe one of the local community heads stated that: "Since 1976 no Batoke child has ever been selected to work in SO.NA.RA. Any other Anglophone who gets employed there is by personal effort or might have used the names of the chiefs.....SO.NA.RA only sends me a yearly magazine, nothing more". From the perspective of the contracting companies working in SO.NA.RA, Fritz, one of the personnel said that: "....by employing local labor in our activities, we help SO.NA.RA to create jobs". It is seen here that SO.NA.RA more or less directly absorbs many of the community people with limited skills either for example as drivers or indirectly as manual workers through the contracting companies. What seems very clear in the various expressions is the notion for SO.NA.RA to employ some local people by way of positive discrimination.

#### **4.5 Respondents perspectives of the Socio-Economic impact of activities of SO.NA.RA on local communities.**

When asked about the socio-economic impact of SO.NA.RA in their community or their region as a whole, the responses were comparatively even among all respondents. From the perspective of Uchiba from the company; "We cannot deny that what we actually do here doesn't affect the people here. We have had several comments coming from the department of quality safety, environment and inspection on this subject. Secondly, we also occasionally get across reports written by some university students or NGOs researching on this". This is an indication that evidence abound to certify that the local residents actually suffer from environmental

degradation and other social ills. Respondents from the local authorities expressed varied opinions in this question. Some held that SO.NA.RA was supposed to collaborate with the councils in providing the community with social projects including health care delivery systems, scholarships for students, or good drinking water but this has never taken place. Another representative from the local authorities said that, his community has never benefited at all from the company because the managing director is from 'Bassa' (a tribe from another region) and so directs all employment opportunities and other benefits to the 'Bassa' people or the francophone Cameroonians. Information from Bissong a local authority from the Limbe 2 council revealed that the management of the studied company insists that by law, the local councils and communities are not supposed to benefit directly from SO.NA.RA except through the city council where SO.NA.RA pays its taxes and every aspect that has to do with development. In the respondents own words: *".....The fact that SO.NA.RA does not pay any taxes to the Limbe 2 council is an impediment to the development plans of our council and many people are not aware of this. But to save our jobs we only have to remain silent knowing well that the state is to be blamed"*. It is a point of interest to acknowledge here that though SO.NA.RA operates in Limbola-Limbe under the jurisdiction of the Limbe 2 council, the central government directs its taxes to the coffers of the city council thereby depriving the local council and its people from this benefit. This people are those who suffer the socio-economic damages of the company's operations. Responses from the local residents complement each other. Their opinions revealed that their area is gradually being transformed into a francophone zone because lower level francophone employees plan to relocate and live there permanently. Secondly, most of the contractors working in SO.NA.RA do not permit the local people to sell even food to the workers. Contractors instead bring workers or those to sell food from Douala - a distant city. Local youths remain unemployed because waste from SO.NA.RA drives fish from the coast thus, increasing the distances for any good catch to be made. Farmers on the other hand suffer pollution on their crops resulting to poor harvest, persistent unemployment and poverty. In the words of one of the local residents: *"Waste oil which is being directed into the sea all the time constantly destroys our fishing nets"*. Some of the respondents said that there is a high rate of road accidents as a result of so many tankers circulating or plying the single road with small carriage ways. These are evidences of environmental degradation and related social problems hinted above.

#### **4.6 Respondents opinions on the practice of the Equal Opportunity Policy, the Diversity Policy and the Regional Balance Policy in SO.NA.RA.**

When respondents were asked about whether other policies including the value and diversity policy; the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy; the Cameroon Regional Balance Policy influence decisions on recruitment and selection in SO.NA.RA, the following responses were given: Personnel from the company have converging viewpoints that revolve around the fact that people from all ten regions of Cameroon work in SO.NA.RA. Also when the company is involved in giant expansion projects such as the revamping of the existing distillation units, the addition of new vacuum distillation units or the new reformer unit or other off sites utility facilities, the company employs even low skill workers from across the country to provide the manual labor. At this juncture, all policies that guarantee fairness are strictly observed and everyone is given an equal chance in the selection unlike when the company is searching for a particular skill. The opinion from the local authorities and community residents hold that, some

of these policies exist only on paper because many Ivorian youths work at lower levels in SO.NA.RA while many community youths remain roaming the company's vicinity unemployed. One respondent (a taxi driver) said that: *"I do not have relatives working here, so it is hard for me to get a job since from my names, those in charge know that I am not a francophone"*. This implies names are likely to be used as tools to discriminate in SO.NA.RA. Cameroon with its extensive ethnic character, surnames usually denote where one comes from mostly in terms of region or division. When further asked about the presence of many Ivorian youths working in the company, it was revealed that these youths are brought to Cameroon by Ivorian contractors that happen to win contracts in SO.NA.RA.

#### **4.7 Respondents opinions about Corruption or Discrimination in Recruitment/Selection in SO.NA.RA.**

When questions relating to corruption and discrimination were asked, the responses were uneven among the various categories of the respondents. Those who constitute the personnel of the company gave similar responses that the organizational culture and rules governing SO.NA.RA condemn corruption/discrimination. Most of them said that they were hired by the company based on merit. When this question was shifted to the contractors, all of them reveal that their continuous partnership with SO.NA.RA is as a result of hard work. In the words of Koge, one of the contractors: *"We strongly look for the skills and to give SO.NA.RA what is needed that is why after every five years, SO.NA.RA keeps renewing our contracts"*. This could imply that SO.NA.RA retains talent as a strategic tool to be more competitive. Most answers that were given by the community residents and the local authority representatives reveal that SO.NA.RA is a victim of corruption and discrimination. Some said that corruption and discrimination is done with impunity and the state perpetuates it by appointing the managing directors not only from a single region, division or subdivision, but from the same family. Bissong from Limbe 2 council revealed that: *"If not of corruption and discrimination, why are all general managers coming from kribi...it is too much, the media cannot lie all the time as we also hear that the hierarchy of the company is under investigation"*. The fact that successively two managers were appointed from same region signifies bias and denouncement of the regional balance policy in Cameroon. All the local authority heads agreed that SO.NA.RA has never granted them audience to dialogue on community issues despite uncounted effort. SO.NA.RA has turned down all invitations by NGOs and civil society organizations to mediate between the company and local communities. According to them the absence of a democratic culture in the company means that the company is corrupt. In the words of Kombe one local community representative: *"I have written several petitions to them but what I get in reply is that SO.NA.RA does not owe us"*. From the sampling of opinion among the various workers of the various companies, the responses were not corresponding. The majority agreed that though they have relatives working in SO.NA.RA, they were recruited based on merit. For example, Ebenitoe a security staff in the company recounts that: *"I have worked here for seven years. My uncle who is a contractor here informed me about this job and I applied and was selected"*. A good number of the skilled workers revealed that they applied directly to the human resources and were given the offer to work. This can be untrue as well because there is a common saying within the elite group in Cameroon that "one cannot bite the finger that fits him" which means it is disloyalty to say in public that which could tarnish the image of one's benefactor.

## 5 ANALYSES OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents an *analysis* of the empirical findings in relation to the research questions and relevant theories. It will follow the sequential pattern that the data has been presented in the preceding chapter. Here, the first research question of *in what ways are the Recruitment and Selection Policies implementation in SO.NA.RA perceived to be effective and efficient* will be addressed according to the following salient headings:

### 5.1 SO.NA.RA's Recruitment Strategies and Implementation

As already highlighted in the preceding chapter, Boxall, Purcell and Wright (2007) contend that firms' recruitment strategies are the most critical strategies within the human resource activity, in order for them to survive and succeed. They emphasized five different questions that organizations have to address to have an effective recruitment strategy. The recruitment strategies of the studied company will be discussed according to these different questions:

**5.1.1** In the first question of *whom to recruit?* It was realized from the range of opinions that SO.NA.RA counts "*on a befitting personality and the needed competencies of the candidates*" as a major requirement in the recruitment and selection. The notion of needed competencies is a key point because it underscores the strategic objective of companies that wish to achieve success by employing the right person with the right competencies at the right time. This finds expression in the perspective of Barney (2001) who asserts that firms should constantly evaluate their workforce to ensure that they have the right people with the right skills in the right places to ensure sustained competitive advantage. The personality 'fit' also plays a big role in the recruitment process. This view is echoed by Salaman, Storey and Bilsberry (2005) when they argue that firms that tailor their work practices to their strategic and environmental contingencies should be able to realize additional performance gains. These authors observe that a highly productive workforce is most likely to possess characteristics that make it a distinguished valuable asset. Therefore companies that propound effective routines for acquiring human assets develop a stock of talent that cannot easily be imitated.

**5.1.2** Looking at the second question of *where to recruit?* Thelma from the HR department indicated that recruitment and selection in SO.NA.RA is done using internal and external sources. The company tries as much as possible to maximize the advantages of using both sources to their strategic ends since internal recruitment is believed to have the ability of creating loyalty and job security among workers which may be difficult if the staff is outsourced. Secondly, internal recruitment minimizes the wastage of time and other resources that would have been invested in advertisement or in training the new employee, (Molander 1990). It is more likely that in SO.NA.RA only scarce or high quality talent is recruited from abroad. Thelma quoted the Director of HR and Administration and also Total Company from France as examples. This could be based on the premise underlined by Boxall (1996, 1998) that firms that recruit and retain exceptional individuals have the capability of generating human capital advantage. Nevertheless the company lays emphasis on internal recruitment since it tends to boost employee motivation because of fear of external recruitment as Chan (1996) argued.

**5.1.3** In the third question of *what recruitment sources to use?* SO.NA.RA more or less depends on internal recruitment. This implies that the HR department is the one who manages to seek the candidates. An opinion from Thelma indicates that at times the company advertises jobs in their yearly “...*Magazine or intranet for our existing employees whom we already trust depending on the timing*”. From a SHRM perspective, this approach helps the department to efficiently find the most appropriate people that fit with their business goal. This notwithstanding, it is undeniable that sometimes they need to use the recruitment firms for instance NEF or other headhunters when the needed talent is scarce. It was also realized that some top ranking positions are appointed by the head of state. This sounds unconventional because drawing for instance from the HR policy of Loughborough University in the United Kingdom; a good selection process is supposed to provide the opportunity to ensure that the best candidate is appointed. The people involved in the process of recruitment, selection and appointment must consider relevant legislation and codes of practice governing the processes and must not alter them in any way. It is therefore very risky to appoint the wrong person at the helm of the company mindful of the fact that a little error in the recruitment process can have serious consequences for companies’ survival and success. (Storey et al., 2009). In addition, there is also an iota of corruption and discrimination visible in certain appointments based on respondents remarks that the two MDs who have been in control of the company since its creation came from the same family. Barney (1991) underlines that, the quality of the management process and of the company’s workplace culture are seen as important factors that explain enduring differences in business performance. SO.NA.RA has to stand aloof of the least suspicion of the culture of discrimination or corruption in the minds of both its workforce and spectators to ensure a high score on this assumption.

**5.1.4** The fourth question of *when to recruit* explains time strategies that is, the most appropriate time that the company gets involved in the recruitment of new employees. From the various views, SO.NA.RA makes sure that time is taken to consider whether there is “need” or there is a vacancy to cover. It also considers whether it is appropriate to recruit to the same position, on the same scale and in the same structure. These reflections by the company captures the views of Wernerfelt (1984), who advocates that, strategy “is a balance between the exploitation of existing resources and the development of new ones”. It is seen here that SO.NA.RA is an administrative organization and a collection of productive resources that takes recruitment decisions after a stringent analysis of the workforce and timing.

**5.1.5** Coming to the fifth question of *what message to communicate?* Respondents gave different perspectives that imply the information that is conveyed to attract the talent that is wanted. What synchronizes the principles of SHRM in some of these messages is when some of the respondents said that messages are constructed in a manner that the job posting encourages self selection and does not discriminate. Lien (2002) argues that there is a possibility of allocation insufficiencies in discriminatory practices. The fact that respondents outlined that the adverts are meant to attract workers from anywhere in the world and contain the post title, post number, the salary, benefits or allowances, key duties, skills and experience, type and duration of contract, closing date, interview date, contact address of the company and some others, portrays that SO.NA.RA practices good employment practices and diversity management which mirrors what the CIPD (2011) factsheet underlines. The advert as could be seen in appendix 02 presents clearly how SO.NA.RA strives to obtain from a heterogeneous workforce the same commitment,

productivity, quality and profits that the company can as well obtain from its homogenous workforce. These were some of the reflections of Thomas (1990; cf. Omanović 2009).

## **5.2 The Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Recruitment/Selection Strategy in SO.NA.RA.**

This was an important objective that was intended to evaluate from the management stand point how the company can be qualified as effective and efficient in its recruitment strategies and implementation processes. Firstly, respondents to whom this question was directed pointed out that effectiveness is assured since the principles of the labor code, gender and diversity, regional balance and quotas interplay in the recruitment of the workforce to ensure that there is fitness to the overall business goal. Implicitly, some insights about this question has already been extrapolated from the five salient questions propounded by Boxall, Purcell and Wright (2007) about what entails to make up a viable and successful recruitment strategy for organizations. From a more direct approach on this questions, respondents acknowledge that the company uses its 'people' and designs some techniques to get anticipated results in time and space. This is the opinion held by Davenport (1999) when he argued that, people possess innate abilities, behavior and personal energy and these elements constitute the human capital they bring to their work. And it is they, not their employers, who own this capital. By coordinating this capital after a careful recruitment and selection that is guided by the aforementioned principles to get desired results suggests that the company is efficient and effective as also portrayed by James et al., (1979). Moreover, Stredwick (2000) noted that an effective recruitment plan often involve issues of considering internal applications, developing existing employees, handling and processing applications in a fast and proper way, not exaggerating or making false claims in the job advertisement and not discriminating in any way.

From his empirical studies, Frynas remarked that nowadays, oil companies are active and more often assist in youth employment programmes in developing countries. Considering the discriminatory evidence from some of the responses, one cannot easily determine whether SO.NA.RA observes these perspectives in their business strategies even though fairness is actually exhibited for example, as could be seen on the job application advertisement in appendix 02. In many developing countries oil, gas and mining companies are expected to deliver development through CSR activities that encompass employment issues, as Frynas (2005) argued. The point of focus at this juncture is to address the second research question of "*in what ways is SO.NA.RA important to the local communities where it is located with particular attention to employment issues?*" since this study is to appraise the studied company within the realms of some of these contemporary standards.

## **5.3 SO.NA.RA's Employment Practice and CSR to the local communities where its operations are carried out.**

Drawing from the empirical findings, a majority of the respondents agree that SO.NA.RA is obliged to be socially responsible that is, to contribute to a better society and environment. The results correspond with the ideas of Frynas (2005) who reveals that during exploration for oil, potential environmental damage abound in which case, oil companies should engage in social investment in the localities where they operate in order to maintain a stable work environment because as witnessed in the Niger Delta Nigeria, community protest has halted oil operations and can result to competitive disadvantage. It is therefore advisable for oil companies to develop

projects as a way of buying the local communities' agreement to allow them to go on smoothly with their commercial operations. For example Persson a respondent from the legal department in the company, postulated with concrete evidence that beyond the provisioning of water, electricity to some villages, "...at the moment SO.NA.RA is building a modern pavilion near the Regional hospital Limbe to serve the people of this region and others". Notwithstanding this assertion, a high level of skepticism towards the actual delivery or practices of CSR by the company is also reflected in some comments. Respondents argue that since the creation of SO.NA.RA in 1976, nothing good has been given to the local communities despite several promises by the company. Local unemployment is witnessing a steady increase compounded by the fact that most people are disrupted from their economic engagements as a result of the adverse effects of the company's activities. Moges, one personnel from the department of communication and public relations in the company maintained that there is little they can do because: "*What we must understand in Cameroon is that, he who plays the piper, dictates the tune...the government decides what funds to be allocated in the public relations budget in all state owned corporations, for this reason SO.NA.RA has no funds allocated as of now for local community projects*". This reminds us of the premises of the CIPD (2007b) which emphasizes that HR should be responsible for the key systems and processes underpinning effective delivery of CSR. Unlike the state, through the human resource, CSR can be given credibility and aligned with how businesses run. HR will ensure that CSR be integrated into processes such as the employer brand, recruitment, appraisal, retention, motivation, reward, internal communication, diversity, coaching and training. This will reduce threats of ineffective delivery as witnessed in SO.NA.RA whereby it is the state that defines the CSR strategy. As argued by Boxall et al., (2007) while HRM supports commercial outcomes often called "the business case", it also seeks to serve organizational needs for social legitimacy.

#### **5.4 The Socio-Economic impact of activities of SO.NA.RA on local communities**

All respondents acknowledge that there are several damages that abound as a result of the company's activities in their area. These damages range from environmental, to socio-economic damages. Mohr, Webb & Harris (2001) argue that companies that are socially responsible should be capable of minimizing the harmful effects of their operations and maximize their beneficial effects on the society. The pollution caused by SO.NA.RA on agriculture and fishery in these communities has kept many residents unemployed. Misery is also a common phenomenon as many families occasionally have victims of road accidents caused by tankers that come to carry oil. This is contrary to the views of Armstrong (2009) who argues that, organizations are supposed to observe as a basic requirement to treat people well and give them opportunities for employment, learning and development.

#### **5.5 The practice of the Equal Opportunity Policy, Diversity Policy and the Regional Balance Policy in SO.NA.RA.**

Armstrong (2009) argument for organizations to treat people equally in terms of opportunities for employment, learning and development could be upheld as a basic principle in a recruitment strategy that incorporates the EOP, the Diversity policy or the contextual Regional Balance policy that is institutionalized in Cameroon. Respondents voiced different opinions about the impact of these policies on the recruitment and selection in SO.NA.RA. Those from the inner



core of the company hold that people from all the ten regions of Cameroon are workers in the company which implies that there is some level of regional representation in the selection. The fact that some workers from Ivory Coast, France and Switzerland also work in SO.NA.RA was another milestone to attest that SO.NA.RA has a value for diversity. This question became controversial when other respondents argue that recruiting managers are more likely to avoid certain names that they do not identify with. This gives one the impression that such policies could just be rubber stamps as was heard from one of the respondents: *“I do not have relatives working here, so it is hard for me to get a job since from my names, those in charge know that I am not a francophone”*. The various responses evoked a lot of contradictions as to whether SO.NA.RA ‘s recruitment endeavors can be considered a benchmark particularly in today’s companies and their managers who are exerting a lot of pressure resulting from globalization and competition.

### **5.6 Corruption or Discrimination in Recruitment/Selection in SONARA.**

Whereas respondents from the companies selected for the study maintained vehemently that, signs of discrimination or corruption are not visible in SO.NA.RA, all respondents outside these companies maintain that corruption and discrimination is a password to gain employment into the company. Most of those who took this position are the urban poor community residents. As noted by the World Bank (2000), these can be those incapable of paying the extra costs that are needed for bribery and fraud, thus rendering them the most affected victims of corruption. Rauch & Evans (2000) equally notice that corruption is likely to be higher in governments where recruitment or promotion is based on other factors like nepotism than on merit. This is visible and decried in the following remark by Bisong one of the respondents from the Limbe 2 council: *“If not of corruption and discrimination, why are all general managers coming from kribi...it is too much, the media cannot lie all the time as we also hear that the hierarchy of the company is under investigation”*. Moreover, the fact that SO.NA.RA has never granted audience for the various stakeholders (Heads of local authorities, NGOs) to discuss matters relating to its CSR to the communities indicates the lack of a democratic culture in this company. Correspondently, UNACA (2004) underlines that corruption undermines democracy and the rule of law and allows other threats to human security to flourish.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This is the *conclusion* chapter. Here the research questions are answered and the limitations and contributions of the study are analyzed with a gap for further research on the subject.

Drawing from Windolf's typology (figure 03) conclusions can be made that SO.NA.RA is both innovative and autonomous. This is justified by the fact that it searches for different categories of employees and is very accurate in its recruitment process in the searching and buying of innovative human capital and other companies into the business. Since the company also has predefined recruiting standards (appendix 02) and look for best candidates, the company is seen as autonomous. The innovative strategy is characterized by the fact that the firm tries to attract as many potential innovators as possible. It is likely to use all recruitment channels available, such as newspapers, head hunters or employment agencies, and social networks. Internet circulars are used to attract as many applicants as possible. The Company attracts a large heterogeneous group of applicants that matches its EOP, the Regional Balance and diversity policies.

Irrespective of this, other opinions projected SO.NA.RA's recruitment packages as a mere lip service. This means that such policies represent a smoke screen since what is preached is not put in practice. The empirical validation to this claim stems from the fact that successively, SO.NA.RA has been manned by two directors from the same family in spite the fact that Cameroon hosts approximately 256 ethnic groups. Of course the mandates of these directors were not chosen by balloting meaning that the ethnic succession policy of regional balance was seldom applied in these circumstances. SO.NA.RA can thus be classified as a negative organization from Healy's (1993) argument since the company assumes that it does not discriminate whereas it might consciously discriminate. Recruitment discrimination has been identified as arousing a lot of curiosity in most state corporations in Cameroon. Most recently, the prime minister of Cameroon watered down accusations of managerial slips by managers of the Cameroon Airline Company underlining discrimination in recruitment as a contributory factor to the company's inability to deliver anticipated outcomes since 2006, (Cameroonpostline, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2012). At this juncture, it is difficult to argue the 68.3% rate of underemployment in the country that is being perpetuated by corruption/discrimination thus, confirming the Transparency International CPI that ranks Cameroon 134 out of 182 countries considered in its classification. From these analyses, it will not be an overstatement to conclude that the result of this study is generalisable to other state owned corporations.

Further, a critical look at SO.NA.RA unravels some weaknesses in its recruitment arrangements. Firstly, there is the absence of CSR policy in the overall business strategy. This goes to address the second research question by revealing that, the local community people around where SO.NA.RA operates do not benefit from the company. This study is expected to raise the curtains of the unsatisfactory treatment of people living in the communities where oil companies operate that is being considered today a topical issue that relates to the increasing questions and evidence of a rift between the stated intensions of business leaders (in the oil, gas and mining sectors) and their actual impact in the real world. Despite the fact that many scholars have postulated varying perspectives on CSR for example; Redington (2005), Armstrong (2009), Frynas (2005, 2009), such conceptual developments have not been fully integrated and institutionalized into the missions of SO.NA.RA. This is evidence in the dissatisfaction of the

local community residents about SO.NA.RA's operations in their horizon. Therefore in a more general level what could be learnt from this investigation within a broad model of business-society relationships is that CSR can provide a coherent framework for business and society without which there will be lack of social legitimacy like the case of the Niger Delta in Nigeria where community disapproval stopped oil operations. Of course, the quality of the firm's reputation as an employer is only one aspect of its social legitimacy, which also includes such things as its impacts on the natural environment, Boxall & Purcell (2008). Secondly, there is a lot of risk taking in the company's staffing approach. Discrimination in the labor market should be discouraged not to develop to become a rational decision-making process in companies because such attitude threatens the exclusion of potential workers from possible employment, just like the various managing directors of SO.NA.RA that are being hired through appointments. The relevant best practice prescriptions in this domain has to be developed acknowledging that the power of the firm in the labor market determines the degree of choice which the firm can exercise in deciding upon a particular recruitment strategy. Moreover, it was not seen as a common practice to use the psychometric test in the last phase of selection of candidates to determine the best personal fit of candidates to the company. From these observations, SO.NA.RA's recruitment strategy could not be qualified as 100% effective and efficient thus, answering the first research question. In all, it would be an interesting research contribution to find out the level of growth of companies that strongly adhere to psychometric test and those that do not consider it as a complementary in the last part of the recruitment and selection process.

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## Appendix 01

### Interview Guide A

#### Personnel of SO.NA.RA (Human Resource Managers/Line managers).

##### *Effective/Efficient recruitment and selection.*

- 1) What criteria apply to the recruitment/selection of people at top managerial positions and other strategic positions in your company? (Who to recruit).
- 2) Do you prefer your potential applicants to come from within the company or some particular regions, countries, race, ethnicity, religion or otherwise? (Where to recruit).
- 3) How and what means do you use to communicate or advertise the job? (What recruitment sources are used).
- 4) When does the company recruit?
- 5) What sources do you frequently use and what information do you usually present for existing vacancies? (What is the message communicated).
- 6) What other policies influence the recruitment/selection policy?
- 7) Are you aware of any instance of corruption/discrimination in recruitment and selection in SO.NA.RA?
- 8) How can you account for the effectiveness/efficiency of your current recruitment/selection strategy?
  
- 9) Is there any mechanism in Cameroon that check compliance to proper recruitment/selection?

##### *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Employment opportunities.*

- 10) Do you think it is obligatory for SO.NA.RA to be socially responsible in hiring local residents and to contribute to a better society and environment?
  
- 11) What is the socio-economic impact of SO.NA.RA in this community or region?
- 12) Are some indigenous people currently working in SO.NA.RA or related contractors?
  
- 13) Do you think the presence of SO.NA.RA in the South West Region reduces local unemployment?
  
- 14) How and what kind of collaboration exist between the local communities and SO.NA.RA?
- 15) In your mandate has this locality or region ever benefited from SO.NA.RA sponsored community-based projects?
- 16) Do you think SO.NA.RA should allocate more funds for social investments?
  
- 17) What can you do to foster cooperation between the company and your community?

*Awareness of Corruption/discrimination*

- 18) Is there any mechanism in Cameroon that check compliance to companies' commitment to CSR?
- 19) Have you experienced corruption or discriminatory situations in SO.NA.RA's employment practices?

## **Interview Guide B**

### **Local Authorities (The Mayor Limbe 2 Council & Chiefs)**

- 20) What and how has your community benefited from SO.NA.RA since its creation in 1976?
- 21) What can you do to foster cooperation between the company and your community?
- 22) What is your opinion about the impact of the company in your locality?

## **Interview Guide C**

### **Contractors**

- 23) How did you become a contractor with SO.NA.RA?
- 24) How many people from the local communities work in your company?
- 25) Does your company contribute in any way to SO.NA.RA on community-based development projects?

## **Interview Guide D**

### **Community residents**

- 26) What is your profession? (socio-economic background).
- 27) Have you ever had the opportunity to apply for jobs in SO.NA.RA?
- 28) Does SO.NA.RA impacts on your life in any way?
- 29) How does your community as a whole benefit from SO.NA.RA?
- 30) Do you know anyone from your area working in SO.NA.RA?

## **Interview Guide E**

### **Workers**

- 31) Where do you come from and how did you get this job? (Region, ethnicity, race, religion etc).
- 32) How do you see SO.NA.RA as a workplace in terms of its recruitment and selection of employees?
- 33) Do you have any relative or people of your region or ethnicity working in SO.NA.RA?
- 34) Do you think SO.NA.RA is corrupt and discriminatory in its recruitment practices?

## **Appendix 02**

### **International Job Vacancy**

**C.M. 7120**

SO.NA.RA OIL, CAMEROON SARL.

OPERATOR OF THE SO.NA.RA D&D JOINT VENTURE.

Sir/Madam,

Sonara Oil Cameroon Limited invites applicants from qualified expatriates with knowledge of:

1. Petrol Chemical Engineering.
2. Drilling Services.
3. Production Engineering.
4. Project Management/Real Estate.
5. Computer Engineering.
6. Designing Engineering/Architect.
7. Economics/Public Relations ( if support Line Break New Line).
8. Software Engineering.
9. Electrical Engineering.
10. Oil Services.
11. Security Officer/Managers/Networking/Firefighters/Divers.
12. Logistics/ Materials/Supply Chain Management/Procurement.
13. Medical Doctors/Nursing.
14. Marketing/MR/Media Planning.
15. Accountant/Financial Manager.

#### **PROJECT SHALL REQUIRE:**

A Corporate Project Management team, engineering, construction, procurement, transportation and installation, safety, drawing, designs, geological services, maintenance and commissioning.

#### **ENTITLEMENT, COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS PACKAGE INCLUDE:**

1. A very attractive net salary monthly pay of US\$ 22.200 or above depending on the field of knowledge ( or Euros, Pounds or Sterling) depending on employee home country and currency preference.
2. Quality single or family housing accommodation in company community.
3. Free medical care in Cameroon for employee and family.
4. Excellent educational assistance benefits with family status employment.
5. Paid airfares allowing full flexibility with holiday travel.
6. Personal effects shipment and excess baggage allowances.
7. Full access to some of the finest and social recreational facilities in Cameroon.

#### CONTRACT DURATION:

Level 01: 12 months, (one year) and renewable only on satisfactory performance of employee.

Level 02: Full time. Interested candidates must have not less than 2years experience in any of the above listed fields.

#### METHOD OF APPLICATION:

Interested candidates should complete the form below and send it together with photocopies of certificates, a passport size photograph and any other relevant credential VIA Email to:

THE MANAGER:

Human Resource Shared Services  
Sonara Oil Cameroon Sarl  
No 52 Beach Road, New Town  
Limbe – Cameroon  
Email: [sonara\\_cameroon@yahoo.fr](mailto:sonara_cameroon@yahoo.fr)  
Telephone: 00237 96031013

#### APPLICANTS SHOULD NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

- Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.
- Only applicants who possess the qualifications indicated and whose CVs are in the above format will be shortlisted.
- Multiple applicants will not be entertained.

Thanks,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
SO.NA.RA OIL CAMEROON SARL.