

BIOGRAPHY

Ms. Gladys A. Ndang was born in the coastal resort city of Victoria (now Limbe), Cameroon on April 27, 1957. In 1976, after completing her secondary education in Cameroon, her father sent her to Switzerland to continue her studies. She spent two years in Zurich studying German in the Dolmetscherschule, and subsequently moved to Geneva, Switzerland. There she spent the next thirty-four years, first obtaining a diploma from Ecole Bénédict, followed by employment with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1981. During the long course of her UNHCR career, she undertook various missions and assignments in conflict-ridden areas throughout Africa and Europe.

Ms. Ndang's work with the United Nations sensitized her to the needs of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the destitute. She saw again and again that one group in particular was hard hit—young single mothers. Her resolve to one day do more to help and address the specific needs of this group was taken during her 2-years assignment to Aru (Dem. Rep. of Congo.) in 1990. She was in charge of administration and to coordinate and monitor field operations for the refugee population. Being at the forefront of events brought her face to face with the critical conditions of those fleeing from war to find refuge in unknown ground. She was particularly moved by the state of the women, who were acutely affected by the harshness of the conditions. Some arrived practically naked; she had to rush to her wardrobe to get dresses and wrappers to give to the women to cover themselves. She was also heartbroken, to notice that some of these women had no access to food that was distributed to refugees, because the men would rather sell the rations for cash. Generally, the women and girls were uneducated and were afraid of expressing themselves. This experience made her realize, the vulnerability of women, the injustice of society to the weak and destitute, and the fragility of our humanity.

To better serve Haven of Hope's needs and the young women it assists, Ms. Ndang supplemented her many years of hands-on UN experience with a three-year course in counselling (Empreinte Formations - Jacques Poujol, France), and a two-year Program Management training (Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, St. Genis-Pouilly, France).

In May 2012 she decided the time was right to fulfil her pledge. She took early retirement from UNHCR and established the Ndang Sisters' Foundation under the public and registered name of Haven of Hope, based in Bamenda, Cameroon. Haven of Hope went operational in 2013.

Ms. Ndang is mother of two grown sons who live in France, and foster mother of 3 siblings (2 girls and a boy), now also adults.

She enjoys preparing fruit juice of various flavours, loves nature and enjoys strolling in the woods, swimming and inhaling the ocean air along the Atlantic ocean coastal beach of Victoria (Limbe).



Ms Ndang with her sons and daughter-in-law.