Policy Briefing:

Student-Led Community Health: Supporting CAMESA and the Next Generation

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Overview:

This policy briefing synthesizes key insights from the 132nd session of the Cameroon Town Hall for Healthcare Professionals, held on June 27, 2026, with the Cameroon English Speaking Medical Students' Association (CAMESA) and His Excellency Dr. Manaouda Malachie, Minister of Public Health.

Context:

CAMESA has run annual campaigns since 2003 in underserved and crisis-affected communities of the North West and South West, reporting over 28,000 patients seen. Its 2026 campaign in Kupe Muanenguba targeted about 1,500 people, mainly internally displaced, with a funding gap of 7,872,975 FCFA.

Key Issues:

1. **Funding:** Campaigns depend on yearly fundraising from alumni and partners.
2. **Follow-up:** Patients found during a one-week campaign need a place to continue care.
3. **Customs barriers:** Donated equipment, such as retired laboratory instruments, is held up at customs.
4. **Recognition:** Student initiatives had no formal link to national programmes until the Minister's announcements.

Discussion Highlights:

- The Minister announced annual community health innovation awards from 2027 and a collaboration framework with CAMESA and the town hall.
- About 89% of the population lives within 60 minutes of a facility, according to Prof. Sobngwi.
- Members pledged cash, equipment, follow-up care and internships during the session.
- Speakers agreed that follow-up and work through district medical officers are what make campaigns last.

Recommendations:

- **Publish the award rules early:** MINSANTE should publish criteria, categories and timelines for the 2027 community health innovation awards, open to all student associations. First step: a call for entries with merit-based scoring and reporting standards.
- **Formalise the collaboration framework:** MINSANTE technical services, CAMESA and the town hall should sign a framework linking student campaigns to district health plans, surveillance and national programmes. First step: a standard data sheet so campaign findings reach the district health information system.
- **Build follow-up into every campaign:** CAMESA, district medical officers and partner facilities (such as Premier Health Centre and CLEAR Radiology) should agree referral pathways before deployment. First step: a referral register for the Kupe Muanenguba campaign shared with the district.
- **Clear the path for donated equipment:** MINSANTE's directorate of health operations should publish the procedure for customs exoneration of donated medical equipment and match donations to facility needs, including reagent supply. First step: a single contact point on the Ministry's diaspora platform.
- **Sustain student campaigns:** Diaspora professionals, alumni and the town hall should give multi-year support to CAMESA and similar associations, conditioned on the transparent reporting CAMESA already provides. First step: a published post-campaign report and accounts for 2026.

Next Steps: The 2026 CAMESA campaign was scheduled for August 2026 in Kupe Muanenguba division, with pledges to be transferred by July. MINSANTE was to set up the collaboration framework and launch the innovation awards in 2027. ACPA planned to present its Buea cancer report to the Ministry.

Conclusion: The session showed students already delivering care where it is scarce, a Minister ready to recognise them, and a diaspora willing to fund and equip them. Follow-up, clear rules and steady funding will decide how much of this lasts.

Prepared by the Co-Moderators, Cameroon Townhall for Healthcare Professionals, from the session of June 27, 2026. Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNN8ipjayuM