Shirley Ardener (Shirley G. Ardener) is a pioneer of research on women (doing women’s studies more-or-less avant la lettre) and a committed researcher working with Bakweri people in Cameroon since the 1950s, initially with Edwin Ardener.

She published an important analysis of forms of credit (Rotating credit associations) that has been influential on subsequent work on the informal economy and microcredit systems: see Rotating savings and credit association. Her work as editor has seen the publication of many key texts such as Perceiving Women, 1975. This collection also includes her essay Sexual Insult and Female Militancy a foundational text demonstrating how the personal can be made deeply political. (This was cited in Anlu (Cameroon)).

She helped found and was the founding director of the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women (CCCRW) at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford informally since 1973, formally since 1983 (Davies and Waldren 2007: 252). The CCCRW has now become the International Gender Studies Centre (IGS) based at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

She was the minute taker at the meeting that Dag Hammarskjöld had in Cameroon in the run up to independence in Cameroon on 2 Jan 1959.

Distinctions:
Welcome Medal for Anthropology in 1962
OBE 1991

Selected publications:
Perceiving Women (editor and contributor), Berg Publications, 1975
Defining Females (editor and contributor), Berg, 1978
Women and Space; ground rules and social maps (editor and contributor), Berg, 1981
The Incorporated Wife (co-ed and contributor) Berg, 1984
Visibility and Power, Essays on Women in Society and Development (co-editor, and contributor) OUP India, 1986
Persons and Powers of Women (ed. and contributor), Berg, 1992
Women and Missions, co-editor, Berg, 1993
Bilingual Women, co-editor, Berg, 1994
Money-Go-Rounds; women’s use of rotating savings and credit associations (co-ed. and contributor), 1995
Kingdom on Mount Cameroon (annotated edition of papers by E. Ardener) Berghahn Books, 1996
Changing Sex and Bending Gender (co-editor, and contributor) Berghahn Books, 2005
Professional Identities; Policy and Practice in Business and Bureaucracy (co-editor) Berghahn Books, 2007
War and Women Across Continents... (co-editor and contributor), Berghahn Books 2016