



Cameroon

- Population: 22.8 million
- GDP per capita (in US dollars): 1,407
- Republic
- Human development index (HDI): 0.512 (153th rank among 187 countries)
- Gender inequality index (GII): 0.587 (132th rank among 147 countries)
- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): Score of 27 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)
- Member of the African Union since 1963.

- No recent official national statistics on prostitution. In 2010, 18,000 people were prostituted and 4,000 minors between the ages of 11 and 17 were trafficked for prostitution. 40% of young girls between 9 to 20 years of age could be prostituted (*Fondation Scelles*, Prostitution by country).
- The Penal Code (articles 294 and 343) provides for sentences from 6 months to 5 years imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 to 500,000 CFA (33 to 825 US\$/30 to 760 €) for prostitution. Trafficking is punishable by 10 to 20 years in prison (15 to 20 years when the victim is 15 or younger) (*Ecovox*, July-December 2008).
- 8 convictions for child trafficking in 2014 against 1 in 2013. The sentences ranged from 1 to 15 years in prison.
- Domestic human trafficking is a recurrent issue.
- Country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation. Country of destination for sex tourism.
- Human trafficking victims come from Cameroon, Nigeria, Central African Republic and from Western Europe.

There are no current dependable statistics on victims of prostitution and trafficking with purposes of sexual exploitation in Cameroon. The data gathering is still sporadic and does not cover the whole territory, after the 2014 U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons. However the government went on attempting to fight human trafficking. It also carried out the activities mentioned in the 2009 national plan intended to combat both

trafficking and sexual exploitation but the support and protection issues are still causes of concern.

Gaps in the implementation of the legal device

The law voted on April 5th 2011 related to the fight against human trafficking abrogated the law adopted on December 29th 2005 which only dealt with child trafficking; it highlights the significant attempts by the Cameroonian authorities since all forms of trafficking are then criminalized, whether they imply children or adults (*Fondation Scelles*, 2013). This law provides an imprisonment penalty of 10 up to 20 years. Nevertheless the government is facing a big difficulty for very few sentences are pronounced, even though 5 inquiries implying 2 convictions in 2011 and several cases of trafficking were reported to the authorities. For example, according on August 20th 2014, the Styl agency in Tokoto Street in Bonapriso, at the very core of the economic capital, Douala, which is very well known for its activities in the communication and event domains, started new activities in the trafficking with purposes of sexual exploitation (*Camer.be*, August 20th, 2014). This agency was created three years ago under the control of Marie-Christine Molu who promoted sexual services. She kept on offering so many different prostitution services that she failed her main missions. This market generates a high revenue which she does not want to see vanish. In order to extend this activity and receive bigger revenues, she demands a complete silence from the young hostesses who have been recruited. They are not more than 21 years old and are at the clients' entire disposal when she organizes special parties. The communication agency has been turned into a procuring venue the activities of which do not seem to draw policemen's attention. This outrage is apparently still little repressed.

The new 2011 law has led to the creation of an inter-ministry committee responsible for the enforcement of the law and of a national action plan against children's work and trafficking. The law was welcome and reflects the will to better coordinate the actions intended to fight against trafficking so as to combat this plague more efficiently. Several actions in relation with the issues of cooperation and coordination, prevention and protection should be noted. On a national level, according to the 2014 U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons, an awareness campaign against children's trafficking was conducted by the Social Affairs Ministry of Cameroon (MINAS); the latter maintains its active fight against the recurrent "street children" phenomenon. The government has organized training sessions on human trafficking for its authorities and those of some NGO's in cooperation with international institutions. Help to vulnerable victims is also still provided. For instance, among the 19 victims who were identified by the government in 2014, 13 have been placed in NGO'S shelters. In spite of these concrete efforts, the government is still not able to protect victims from sexual exploitation. Actually, although the 2011 law has shown some progress, there are still gaps concerning victims' protection. No measure is provided by the country's legal system in order to protect victims in the frame of legal proceedings against the persons implied in their sexual exploitation. The protection of trafficking victims remains a concerning issue which is seriously lacking a solution. Children are the main victims of the trafficking in Cameroon. They are often trapped into prostitution networks. Rather than protecting them, the government tends to convey repressive addresses, which only makes

them more vulnerable. Moreover, according to the 2013 report on the combat against minors' sexual exploitation, 59.1% among the children arrested by the police are corruption victims. Therefore it is most important that authorities get worried about children's as well as adults' conditions of entrance into prostitution; they should help them have access to official protection.

Main forms of prostitution in Douala, the economic capital

Two main forms of prostitution are deeply rooted in this country, particularly in the economic capital, Douala (*Pensée plurielle*, 2011). These forms have been multiplied in parallel with globalization; sedentary prostitution should be distinguished from the luxury one through prostituted persons' social origins.

Sedentary prostitution occurs in one single determined place and presents different characteristics: street prostitution takes place at night through the soliciting strategy between the women and the men who conclude together the market terms. Street prostitution or "pole" prostitution starts round 6 PM in the capital streets when women and children from the same district gather together. At dawn, these communities are still present on the pavements. "First floor prostitution" occurs at night in the back streets of buildings dedicated to bargaining and sexual intercourse. These exchanges take place as paid guardians are watching in collusion. Last of all, prostitution in bars, cafés and snack-bars is mostly practiced by young people from lower classes who have often immersed themselves in the western culture of the big metropolis. Many places of this type are to be found in precarious districts (New Bell, Bepanda, Mabanda- Bonabéri) and are visited by young people who go through social hardship.

"Luxury prostitution" is practiced by single women as well as married women (they are sometimes foreigners) and girls who often come from a relatively favored social class. These persons travel frequently and can be easily recognized by their clothes and cars. This kind of prostitution has two different forms: "midday prostitution" is operated in public and administrative buildings. Prostituted persons wear smart clothes and pace along corridors so as to meet clients and exchange sexual intercourse in a hotel room after sharing a meal. Prostitution in hotels and inns takes place in lots of accommodation places where it is easy to meet prostituted persons with the managers' complicity. Competition is very hard in snack-bars and inns-hotels which prostituted persons are particularly fond of. Prostitution tends to show a new face: it is no more practiced only at night far from indiscreet eyes but also in the day time, by young women aged between 20 and 30 who are called "call boxers", which means phone-credit salesgirls (*Koaci*, November 25th, 2014).

Prostitution in globalization

Globalization has put an end to the frontiers between peoples and cultures. In Cameroon, the population generally shows more and more interest in new media and communication technologies. A study in 2014 on the frequency of the visits to meeting sites in West Africa, has found significant results (*Camer.be*, August 26th, 2014). Out of 600,000 site visitors, 189,000 are Cameroonian citizens, on average. The percentage of the presence on the sites is

dispatched by region, Cameroon standing first with a frequency rate of 52.7%. These sites are used under cover of another activity. Advertisements often offer domestic jobs such as babysitting or house -working and varied kinds of jobs in agriculture and industry. Street prostitution is repressed and suppressed, but men and women of all ages, younger and younger, very often watch these sites individually in cyber-café, offices or at home. They are often looking for another living environment and wish to escape poverty, sometimes up to the point of disclosing their intimate side in front of a camera. According to Eric Mballa, a sociologist at Douala University, this attitude has to do with the lack of education. While these sites were intended to make people meet, they are more and more often used by traffickers as a means to organize the human trafficking with purposes of sexual exploitation. In parallel with this development of prostitution, another phenomenon seems to be flourishing. Sex tourism is expanding on the territory. Market liberalization has allowed mass tourism to soar particularly in Cameroon, even though this country is not a highly estimated touristic destination. As an example, the city of Kribi, some 124 miles south of Douala, the economic capital, welcomes thousands of tourists each year. At night fall, the city fuels sex tourism through restaurants, night-clubs and bars along the Atlantic coast. Each sexual intercourse costs 10,000 CFA (16.5 US\$/15.2 €) for a Kribi young girl and 60,000 CFA (99 US\$/91 €) for a minor in a hotel room with the hotel porters' complicity (*Slate Afrique*, June 6th, 2014).

In addition to sex tourism involving children and women, child pornography is in full swing. In 2006, about 33% of children have already watched adult prostitution (*ECPAT International*, 2013). Thus there are varied forms of sexual exploitation. Cameroonian authorities take pretext of the plague of prostitution not to face the issue of trafficking with purposes of sexual exploitation, even though they have adopted a charter in 2007 against sex tourism which was signed by the managers of touristic establishments. The authorities should take measures demanding that all pornographic sites and pictures of sexually abused children be discarded. As far as sexual exploitation is concerned, the priority actions intended for an efficient combat against sex tourism should target the reinforced monitoring of the actors in private tourism industry.

Connections between prostitution and migrations

Prostitution in Cameroon is in relation with migration processes (*Sociétés*, 2008). Many women are trapped into prostitution networks as soon as they leave their country, town or region of origin in order to reach a destination place either inside or outside the continent.

Several causes should be identified concerning migrant paths. First of all, social and economic destitution feeds prostitution. Women and younger people leave rural areas to get an easier access to water and infrastructures in towns (*Pensée plurielle*, 2011). According to MINAS report, water was available to 89% of urban populations in 2014 versus to only 49% in rural areas. These women and children are often urged by their families to enter channels that make them believe they will enjoy higher living standards. Once they get to the destination place, women and children are ill-treated and forced into prostitution. They are thus prisoners of a mobile network. Moreover these populations are also obliged to achieve various domestic chores and become preys which can be easily recognized during the trip.

They sometimes wish to climb up the social ladder and enter prostitution in order to pay back their debt to the intermediaries who helped them to leave their country of origin. They have no other choice but to prostitute themselves. Some of these women and teenagers will thus flee from the calamitous forced marriage, a tradition which is still deeply rooted in North Cameroon. They take the risk of leaving their town in a weak psychological position made even more fragile by the separation; that is how they are trapped into channels. Others seek to fly from their country of origin because of high tensions and of an unsteady political regime, which brings about wars and extreme violence. As an example, the Nigerian jihad group called Boko Haram waged aggressive actions in North Cameroon all the 2014 year long. It makes profit out of prostitution which represents an important source of income (between 500,000 and 2 million €/541,550 and 2,16 million US\$ per month). Several persons have been raped by this terrorist group; they are exploited sexually when they do not agree with prostituting themselves (*Challenges*, February 17th, 2015).

Inversely some women come into Cameroon through international channels. European and Asian prostituted persons who are used to travelling a lot have been present in the African capitals for some ten years, particularly in Cameroon which is one of the main places of origin, transit and destination for the trafficking with purposes of sexual exploitation in Africa (*Jeune Afrique*, October 13th, 2014). This new phenomenon of migration is increasing. Basile Ndjio, a social and cultural anthropologist, estimates that between 300 and 700 prostituted persons of Asian origin are working in Douala. Their prices are lower than those of prostituted Cameroonians and constitute a hard competition with the latter.

Street children phenomenon

Prostitution has become a scourge that significantly affects minors (*Autrepart*, 2008).

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), a study conducted together with ILO in 2010, found that about 4,000 children aged between 11 and 17 were victims of prostitution, among whom 98.6% were girls (*ECPAT International*, 2013). Moreover, some studies revealed by MINAS in 2014 point out such phenomenon as street children engaged in prostitution. Social links and family norms have significantly declined since the end of the 90's, which increased families' poverty and children's vulnerability. In 2010, the decision to assume orphans' and other vulnerable children's welfare let appear that a significant number of children under 18 were infected by the HIV/AIDS (as many as 25.3% of the orphans). According to some forecasts, these figures will rise in the next years. Parents' deaths, their infection by the virus and their moral destitution are factors which fuel the street children phenomenon in Cameroon. The number of drop-outs with a rate of 44% should not be ignored, nor the lack of information and education concerning sexual exploitation. Ignorant children are thus easy preys for the actors who organize the traffic with purposes of prostitution.

However it should be noted that, according to the 2014 U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons, an awareness campaign produced positive effects in so far as parents are less and less ready to leave their children in intermediaries' hands. On the other hand, traffickers operate rapes more and more often. The Minas goes on with its work on the infamous phenomenon of street children, a social class which is particularly vulnerable to

sexual exploitation. They have identified 504 new cases of street children in Yaoundé and Douala and offered them services of rehabilitation. To date associations such as “Pour les enfants du Cameroun” work at fund raising in order to help women with HIV/Aids who cannot educate their children and to take children away from streets.

Even though these efforts have been engaged, street children, who are as many victims of sexual exploitation, must be a greater concern for authorities. A more important social and economic support, which is necessary for their physical and psychological rehabilitation, must be implemented so as to facilitate their social reintegration.

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