



Cameroon - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 March 2010

What NGOs are available to support women in relation to issues such as forced prostitution, trafficking, gender discrimination.

A June 2009 *IRIN News* report refers to a local NGO in Cameroon as follows:

"YAOUNDE, 2 June 2009 (IRIN) - Talk openly about rape. That is the gist of a new campaign in Cameroon, where according to a study an estimated 432,000 women and girls have been raped in the past 20 years.

Some 200 rape survivors gathered on 28 May in the capital Yaoundé, several of the women and girls telling their stories during the campaign's opening ceremony.

"From now on we are going to speak publicly about rape so it will no longer be a taboo subject in our society," said Olivia Bikoe of RENATA (Réseau National des Associations de Tantines), a local NGO that supports young mothers and one of the campaign's organizers." (IRIN News (2 June 2009) *Cameroon: Bringing rape out of the shadows*)

The June 2009 *United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report* for Cameroon under the heading 'Protection', notes:

"The Government of Cameroon demonstrated weak efforts to protect trafficking victims over the last year. The government did not operate trafficking victim shelters, but rather referred victims to NGOs providing shelter and other victim services. The government reported that its nine centers for vulnerable children and additional centers for street children were accessible to trafficking victims. Authorities did not follow systematic procedures for identifying trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as street children, women in prostitution, and illegal immigrants. As a result, some victims may have been inappropriately incarcerated or fined for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Officials identified 18 suspected trafficking victims during the year and provided care to 15 of them at a government center for abandoned and orphaned children until Beninese officials repatriated them to Benin. The government referred one trafficking victim to his country's consulate in Cameroon and another to an NGO for care. In September 2008, Cameroonian officials cooperated with Nigerian counterparts to repatriate a 12-year-old Nigerian girl who had been trafficked to Cameroon for forced domestic labor. The government encouraged victims to assist in trafficking investigations and prosecutions, though as noted earlier, there were no reported prosecutions during the year. The government provided foreign victims with temporary residency status until they were repatriated. It did not, however, provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign victims to countries where they face hardship or

retribution.” (United States Department of State (16 June 2009) *Trafficking in Persons Report 2009 – Cameroon*)

A further *IRIN News* article from April 2009 refers to NGOs in Cameroon as follows:

“What is needed, UNICEF's Garnier said, is for government, UN agencies and NGOs to collaborate on reducing malnutrition. "Part of the challenge in the north and far north regions is a lack of NGO partners, particularly to monitor nutrition activities and quality of health care."

He said many NGOs have come in to deal with refugee influxes in Cameroon. "But they leave after those emergency operations. It is difficult to mobilise NGOs for these regions because the problems are structural and because they are not well-known ? we do not hear of them." (IRIN News (18 April 2009) *Cameroon: "Silent emergency" persists*)

Section 2b of the February 2009 *United States Department of State Country Report on Cameroon*, under the heading ‘Freedom of Association’, states:

“The law provides for freedom of association, but the government limited this right in practice.

The conditions for government recognition of political parties, NGOs, or associations are arduous, interminable, and unevenly enforced. The process forced most associations to operate in uncertainty, in which their activities were tolerated but not formally approved.” (United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (25 February 2009) *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Cameroon*)

Section 4 of the same report under the heading ‘Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights’, adds:

“A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing findings on human rights cases; however, government officials repeatedly impeded the effectiveness of local human rights NGOs during the year by harassing their members, limiting access to prisoners, refusing to share information, threatening violence, and using violence against NGO personnel.

Despite these restrictions, numerous independent, domestic human rights NGOs operated in the country, including the National League for Human Rights, the Organization for Human Rights and Freedoms, the Association of Women against Violence, the Movement for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, and the Cameroonian Association of Female Jurists. The government collaborated with domestic NGOs to address child labor, women's rights, and trafficking in persons.” (Ibid)

Regarding NGOs and trafficking, section 5 of the report under the heading ‘Trafficking in Persons’ continues:

“The government continued to work with local and international NGOs to provide temporary shelter and assistance to victims of trafficking. Catholic Relief Services worked to combat corruption in local schools that led to child prostitution. UNICEF was also actively engaged in combating girls' prostitution throughout the year.

The government continued to build awareness among local government and security officials in the areas where trafficking was an issue. Antitrafficking information or education campaigns and antitrafficking spots were broadcast on government radio and television. The government monitored immigration and emigration patterns for evidence of trafficking. Frontier police at airports, borders, and ports reported stopping many trafficking cases but did not provide details regarding specific cases.” (Ibid)

References

IRIN News (2 June 2009) *Cameroon: Bringing rape out of the shadows*
<http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=84670>
(Accessed 9 March 2010)

IRIN News (18 April 2009) *Cameroon: "Silent emergency" persists*
<http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=83986>
(Accessed 10 March 2010)

United States Department of State (16 June 2009) *Trafficking in Persons Report 2009 – Cameroon*
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/123361.pdf>
(Accessed 9 March 2010)

United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (25 February 2009) *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Cameroon*
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/118990.htm>
(Accessed 10 March 2010)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources consulted

Amnesty International
BBC News
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Human Rights Watch
International Crisis Group
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
United Kingdom: Home Office
UNHCR Refworld
United States Department of State