

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD TRAFFICKING
FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



STOP

Child trafficking
and sexual exploitation !

"LET'S PROTECT OUR CHILDREN" COALITION
May 2010

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Breaking the silence	4
Context and Problem	5-7
Facts and figures	8-10
Causes and Consequences.....	11-12
Testimonies.....	13-14
Actors and methods	15-16
How can we bring a change?.....	17-19

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FOREWORD

Since 2004, CIPCRE, through a programme entitled "Easter weeks campaign", focused its activities as regards fight against social scourges, to public awareness on violence against the most vulnerable people of Cameroon society, namely, women, young girls and children. A campaign on violence against women took place in 2004; it was followed by another one on violence against children in 2005. Since 2006, these two activities have been merged to enable us to fight against child trafficking and child sexual exploitation on the one hand and the perversion of the bride price and the inhumane widowhood rites on the other hand.

We have been trying for four years to sensitise parents, youths, education officials, religious communities and public administrations on child trafficking and sexual exploitation, but, we have noticed that this problem is becoming more and more serious.

Moreover, Cameroon is becoming a major centre of child trafficking and sexual exploitation. Due to its strategic and geographic position, an important network of child trafficking whose actors are "traders" "intermediaries", "buyers", and children who are the "goods" has emerged in the country. Exploitation sites are bars; hotels, motor parks, sea port areas and big plantations. Prices are bargained according to the quality of the product. Here the market practice is to make the most out of the weak and immature body of the child so as to satisfy insane customers and self greed.

To face this tragic reality, we have decided to give our sensitisation campaigns another

dimension that will involve advocacy. The main objective here is to fight against structures that favour child trafficking and sexual abuse. In this vein, we created a Faith and Liberation Network which is going to implement common projects, such as the fight against child trafficking and sexual abuse project both at community and international levels.

In order to give more impetus and impact to our activities, we initiated, on March 9, 2010, the creation of a coalition made up of 20 NGOs under the appellation "let's protect our children" coalition.

The advocacy campaign we want to organise is meant to raise more awareness and bring change in the behaviour of Cameroonians in general, and that of families, political, cultural and economic institutions that can contribute efficiently in the fight against this phenomenon.

The present booklet gives a true vision of the dramatic situation in which our children find themselves. It's a tool to sustain the advocacy campaign against child trafficking and sexual abuse.

1- The Easter weeks campaign is a movement that has mobilised protestant, catholic, and Muslim believers since 1998, and also men and women of goodwill in order to fight against ills that destroy our society and delay God's reign of peace and justice.

2- Le Cercle International pour la Promotion de la Création (CIPCRE,) committed itself in documenting the phenomenon of child trafficking and sexual exploitation. For more information, read CAPSCAN report on a study requested by CIPCRE

3- The Faith and Liberation Network is made up of the following associations: Association de Lutte contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes (ALVF), Cercle International pour la Promotion de la Création (CIPCRE), Conseil des Eglises Protestantes du Cameroun (CEPCA), Conseil Supérieur Islamique du Cameroun (CSIC), Dynamique Mondiale de Jeunes (DMJ) Forum Cameroun (FC), Service OEcuménique pour la Paix (SeP) et Service National Justice et Paix de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun (SNJP/CENC), Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix de Yaoundé (CDJP/Yaoundé).



BREAKING THE SILENCE

In the African society, the child is not involved in a dual relationship with his parents. A child belongs to the group or the community in which he lives. He should therefore obey and respect elders. Some wicked people exploit this situation to enrol immature children in criminal and trafficking networks. African traditions of placing or giving away children nurtures the confusion because parents do not realise the dangers

their children are exposed to when they let them go without any form of control. Thus, children find themselves victims of diverse types of exploitation and they endure sufferings without anybody being aware. This situation is accentuated by the silence around this disturbing issue.

Child trafficking for economic exploitation is well known in Cameroon and many people talk about it. Many studies were carried out to document the phenomenon. But child trafficking for sexual exploitation has not attracted the curiosity of Cameroon social actors. It remains in darkness and makes victims. A study, requested by CIPCRE in 2004, showed that 40% of female pre-adolescents and adolescents are victims of sexual exploitation for commercial reasons with more or less consent of their parents.

On the basis of these results, a huge sensitisation campaign of the public, administrative, political and religious authorities was organised on the issue in the 4 regions concerned with CIPCRE study within the framework of the Easter Weeks Campaigns held in 2006 and 2007. Unfortunately, child trafficking for sexual exploitation as well as all other forms of sexual violence against children is a taboo for populations. Meanwhile, it is developing slowly in a silent environment.

To tackle this scourge, the Cameroonian Head of State promulgated a law on 29th December 2005 that condemns and punishes child trafficking. The implementation of this law remains a problem. Child trafficking continues to make victims, favoured by the misery and anthropological poverty of families and the increasing demand by customers of infant prostitution who pay more and more money to satisfy their perverse phantasms.

A study we carried recently shows that about 4000 children are victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation. We want to help solve this dramatic situation by breaking the silence that embeds it.

Considering the long term impact of such a situation and conscious of the inalienable rights of the child, twenty foreign organisations and those of the Cameroon civil society have decided to create a coalition that would implement an advocacy campaign against child trafficking for sexual exploitation. Its objective is to create awareness within political, social, cultural and economic structures which are at the origin of the phenomenon.

From their first meeting, these associations expressed their concern for making the child interest a common preoccupation. That is why it is called 'let's protect our children' Coalition.

Breaking the silence is the objective assigned to this campaign magazine which is meant to be an information, sensitisation and advocacy tool. It presents, in a simple and synthetic language, results of the study we ordered in 2008. The result of this study enabled us to better understand the problem and make alternative proposals. The coalition wishes, through this means, to mobilise the highest number of people in order to defend the case of the child.

May each and every one feel directly concerned!

*For the Coalition, The Spokesperson
Pastor Jean-Blaise Kenmogne,
Director General of CIPCRE*

CONTEXT AND PROBLEM



Child trafficking for sexual exploitation is a phenomenon in expansion in Cameroon. But it still remains a taboo here like in other parts of the world. Consequently, specific studies and data in figures are not easily obtainable. There are more relevant statistics on child labour than child trafficking.

Concerning child labour, a study carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows that 550 000 children undergo the worse forms of labour in Cameroon; among them, 33,3% do domestic work, 19.8% sell in the streets, 7% work in restaurants and bars, 7% are involved in prostitution and the rest work in markets and car wash. 15 year boys and girls within these activities are victims of sexual abuse from those who exploit them.

A recent study ordered by CIPCRE in 2008, shows that the geographical situation of Cameroon makes it attractive for international trafficking. Cameroon is therefore a destination for children victims of trafficking coming from neighbouring countries. It is at the same time a transitional country for child trafficking and sexual exploitation to European countries such as UK, France, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland. Child trafficking is also practised in the country.

The map shows the triple status of Cameroon as concerning child trafficking for sexual exploitation. It also shows the ways that phenomenon takes and its impact:

Key

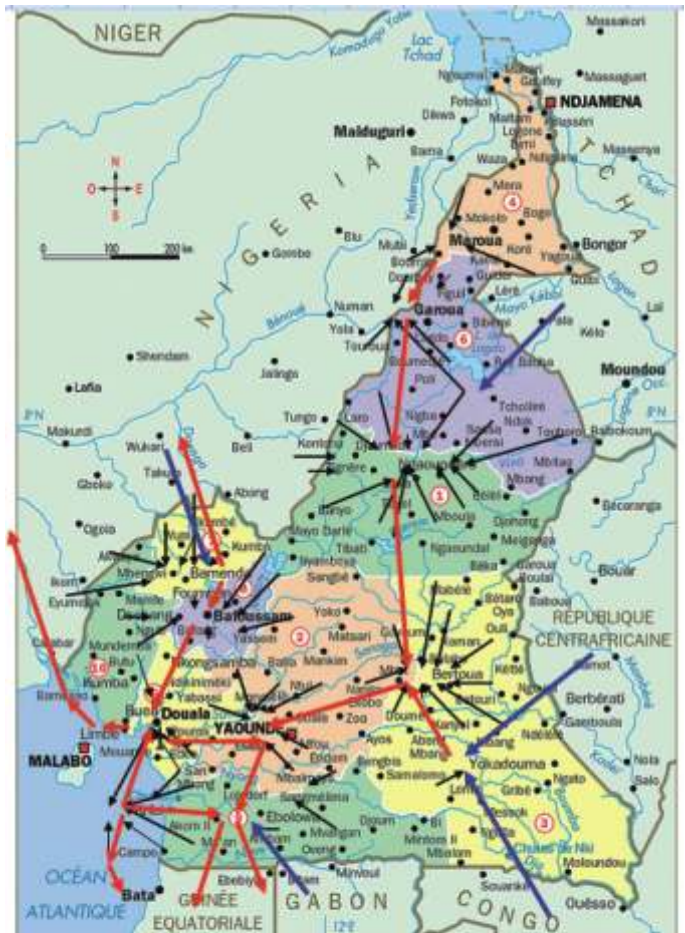
Movements of children from villages and cities to regional capitals

Movements of children between large cities to neighbouring countries

Movements of children from neighbouring countries to Cameroon



Cameroon plays three different roles as far as child trafficking for sexual exploitation is concerned: It is a source, a transit and a destination country.



Regions

- ① Adamawa
- ③ East
- ⑤ Littoral
- ⑦ North West
- ⑨ Sud
- ② Centre
- ④ Far North
- ⑥ North
- ⑧ West
- ⑩ South-west



Child trafficking is a well organised business in Cameroon with its actors and its networks. One can draw up the itinerary of a child who is enrolled in trafficking. Within the country, victims leave villages for cities (subdivisions, divisions, regions, capital city). When they leave by themselves, their progression is gradual till they reach the capital city or the economic capital. When they move with families and traffickers, they are directly taken far away from their village to destinations chosen by their employers. Generally, they travel by road.

Concerning international channels, children from neighbouring countries get to Cameroon by road or by sea. Central African Republic victims generally get in through the East region (Bertoua); Chadians enter through the Adamawa, the North and the Far North regions, while Nigerians from Maiduguri State enter through the North and those of the Cross River State enter through the South West and the North West regions. Their integration is facilitated by the large Nigerian community living in Cameroon. They generally get out of the territory via Ebolowa in the South region heading towards Equatorial Guinea and Gabon or through Yaoundé and Douala to Europe and other international routes out of Africa.

What is child trafficking for sexual exploitation?

The law 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 relating to the fight against child trafficking and slavery states that:

" child trafficking is understood as the recruitment, transfer, accommodating or keeping of children for economic exploitation, holding them by force , threat or any other form of constraint, by kidnapping, abduction, fraud, exercising power or profiting from their vulnerability, offering or accepting advantages, in order to obtain the consent of a person who exercises authority on the child."

The same law clarifies other notions relating to trafficking and child exploitation. According to the law, "child trafficking refers to the fact of favouring or ensuring the movement of a child within Cameroon in order to directly or indirectly get a financial advantage or any other type of advantage of any nature".

Concerning child exploitation,

" It involves exploitation, child procuring or any other form of sexual exploitation, exploitation of child labour, or forced services, slavery or similar practices, constraints or organ removal".

Child exploitation includes three key items:

-Child prostitution, i.e., using a child for sexual activities in order to get retribution or any other form of advantage for the child or for his exploiter;

-Pornography, that children perform, is understood as any form of representation, whatever means is used, of a child involved in any sexual activity, be it explicit, real or simulated; or any representation of a child's sexual organs or sexual parts meant for sexual activities;

- Child abduction, child trafficking for prostitution, pornography.

As it is done around us, child trafficking for sexual exploitation is an illegal practice. Despite the numerous judicial and international instruments available to fight against it, child trafficking for sexual exploitation continues its progression in secrecy.



The law 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 relating to the fight against child trafficking and child slavery establishes the illegality of the phenomenon and sanctions authors, co-authors and accomplices of abuses related to sexual exploitation of children. Section 2 of the same law states that imprisonment sentences range from 5 to 20 years and fines range from 10 000 to Fcfa 10 000 000 for those who are found guilty.



FACTS AND FIGURES



More than 4 000 children are in a situation of child trafficking for sexual exploitation in Cameroon!

The facts and figures found below are part of the study carried out in 2008 by an expert hired by CIPCRE. Data given portray the density of child trafficking for sexual exploitation in Cameroon.

According to the study, there are 4 000 children in a situation of child trafficking in Cameroon. Estimates were made from the highest upper bound of the interval of the number of children working for the same employer.

Number of girls/boys working for an employer	Frequency	Estimate
Less than 5 [1-5]	104	520
Between 5 and 10 [5-10]	63	630
Between 10 et 15 [10-15]	114	1710
Between 15 et 20 [15-20]	53	1060
Total	334	3920



□ There are at least 2354 children enrolled in child trafficking for sexual exploitation in Cameroon. If we take the upper bound in figures, the number of children involved in child trafficking for sexual exploitation is estimated at 3920 in the country. There is no doubt that if the sample was widened, estimates would have been more important and catastrophic.

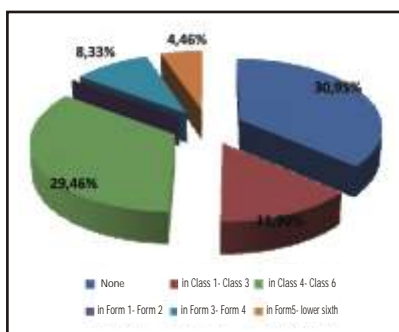
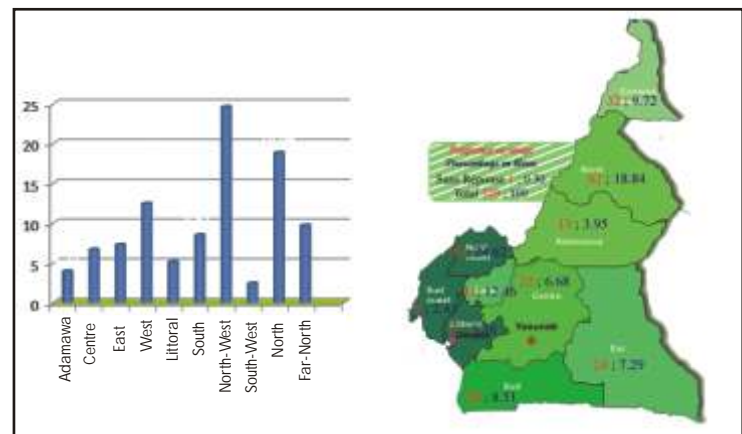
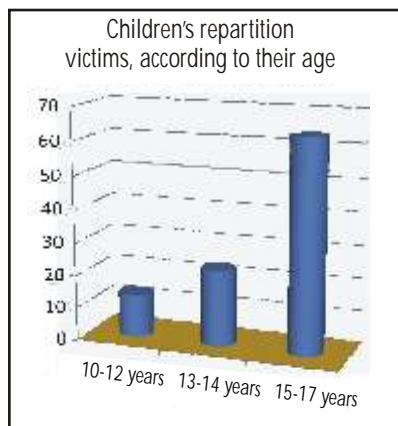
□ Children are exploited by 3360 abductors who earn about Fcfa 12 000 000 per day. Victims are compelled to give results and they are therefore turned into sex machines and money boxes.

□ 36% of victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation are less than 13 years old as it is shown in the table below.

□ 30% of these children are boys and they are exposed to homosexuality.

□ Exploiters permanently control their victims and prevent them from moving around. When possible, they are allowed to move under control.

Origin of victims in Cameroon



□ Among the victims, 40% have never gone to school, 56% have not gone beyond the second year of secondary school.

□ Anglophone regions of Cameroon (North west and South west) count 89 out 329 victims (27.1%). They are followed by northern regions (Adamawa, North; Far North) which count 107 victims (32.4%) making a total of 59.9% of all victims mentioned in the survey.

MORE THAN 366 CHILD ABDUCTORS FREELY MOVING IN CAMEROON!

Repartition of victims according to their education level



Number of working days in a week

Out of the 336 victims of the survey, 179 work 7 days a week (53.3 %), 34 work 6 days a week (10.1 %), 51 work 5 days a week (15.2 %), 35 less than 5 days a week (10.4 %) 37 respondents did not answer.

Working Period

193 out of 336 victims work at night only (57.4 %) 16 work during day time only (4.8 %), 94 work during the day and at night (28 %); 33 out of 336 have given no answers (9.8 %);

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Number of customers per working day or night	Frequency	Percentage
No answer	47	14
from 1 and 3	159	47.3
from 4 and 7	120	35.7
from 8 and 11	1	0.3
unprecise answer	9	2.7
Total	336	100

159 victims receive each between 1 to 3 customers per working day or night (47.30%) 120 receive between 4 and 7 customers each per working day or night (35,7 %).

Possibility for negotiating protected sexual intercourse with customers

In 249 cases out of 336 (74.1 %) , the victim cannot negotiate a protected sexual intercourse with the customer; in 50 cases out of 336, there can be some negotiation (14.9 %). 37 victims have given no answers to the question.

Financial earnings of the victim
Monthly salary

191 victims (56, 8 %) have a salary ranging from Fcfa 15 to 20 000 (23-30 euros), 51 victims (15.2 %) have a salary ranging from Fcfa 20 000 to 25 000 (30-38 euros) and 34 victims (10.1 %) have a salary ranging from Fcfa 25000 to 30 000 (38-45 Euros). 60 victims (17.9%) gave no answers to this question.

Financial earnings of the employer

Victim's earnings during the peak period

(104) victims (31 %) earn Fcfa 5000 to 10000 (7.5 - 15 euros) 81 victims (24.1 %) earn Fcfa 10 000 to 15000 (15 23 euros); 20 victims (6 %) earn Fcfa 15 000 to 20 000 (23 30 euros); 23 (6.8 %), 81 victims (24.1%) earn Fcfa 25 000 to 30 000 (38 45 euros). 27 victims (8 %) gave no answer

Victim's earnings during the slack season

43 Victims (12.8 %) earn about Fcfa 2000 to 5000 daily (3 to 7.5 Euros) ; 76 victims earn Fcfa 5000 to 10 000 (7.5 to 15 Euros); 16 victims earn Fcfa 10 000 to 15000 (15 to 23 Euros); 6 victims earn Fcfa 15000 to 20 000 (30 to 38 Euros); 85 victims earn less than Fcfa 2 000 (3 Euros) 110 victims gave no answer to the question

CAUSES AND EFFECTS



There are thousands of migrant children in search of a salaried job

Child trafficking for sexual exploitation is caused by the prevailing poverty, migratory movements, cultural practices and the profound changes marking our society today.

Poverty strikes families and favors the increase of the number of working children who are exposed to sexual exploitation at an early age. Actually, poor living conditions due to pauperization exposes the children to the rise of trafficking networks. In Cameroon's urban areas, there are thousands of migrant children in search of a salaried job. Far away from their family and cultural landmarks, they are ready to accept everything in order to survive, that is to feed themselves, to dress, and to lodge. Generally, these children wander in stations, markets, and everywhere they can earn some money and find a better way. The traffickers know these areas and therefore exploit the children's weaknesses to set up traffic networks. Actually, there is no displacement of children in this case. Instead, the child is recruited for sexual exploitation. This case is very common in Cameroon, mostly in big cities like Yaoundé or Douala.

Migratory movements are national or transnational and involve mainly candidates for rural depopulation, those who migrate to urban areas with the aim of achieving success in the society. So, as demonstrated by UNICEF, the intention of moving towards another country or another locality such as the town in order to improve one's living condition, may easily render people vulnerable to traffickers networks who scour villages and small towns bogged in poverty.

Some cultural practices are prone to favor children enrolment in trafficker's networks. These are essentially economic and social advantages nourished by some parents who believe they can acquire wealth out of their numerous children. The said children may be used to relieve the hard conditions of life which have become harsher due to socio-economic crisis. In other cases, children abandoned by their parents for not being able to fulfill their basic needs, are bound to struggle to survive in urban centers where they can easily be enrolled in traffickers networks.

The fact of giving away children also makes many of them vulnerable and leads to child trafficking and sexual exploitation. The child becomes the private property of his new tutor and is therefore subject to any type of work. His new guardian will make whatever profits he wants out of him, including sexual exploitation.

Lastly, there is the belief that, having sex with immature children regenerates life. Some men are convinced that they will feel younger after a sexual intercourse with a child. They fail to understand that by doing so, they are violating the physical integrity of the child.

“Feymania”, a system of harassment and rapid enrichment is another factor. This category of people have transformed child trafficking for sexual exploitation into a form of entrepreneurship where cash money is earned from abducted children's sweat.

Internet is also a factor. Eager to leave their country for better opportunities elsewhere, young people look for



immigration via Internet. While boys are looking for training opportunities, sports and academics, girls search for jobs (top models, hairdressing, film and music casting, housework, baby sitting etc). Some try to get in contact with white men who could get

married to them and take them to Europe. This is a door wide open for their recruitment in a new market known as cyber trafficking.

Consequences of child trafficking for sexual exploitation are varied and dramatic.

Irremediable consequences

Children are sexually exploited without any dignity or humanity. This leads to indelible physical harm :

- STI.STD, internal perforations, bleedings;
- Early ageing process;
- Unwanted pregnancies;
- Deaths at delivery stage;
- Malnutrition, sleeplessness, chronic pains and body burns.

“No, she told us that she would pay us but she never did. She was not even living with us. We were abandoned in a house; she only came rarely. We had to struggle any how to eat”. Pauline 16 years

Psychological disorders

Children involved in trafficking for sexual exploitation can have behavioural and anti social problems. They can become gangsters, drug and alcohol addicts, violent and aggressive.

“You are obliged to smoke because you have no choice. She compelled everybody who danced to smoke. I don't know why she obliged us to smoke. Pauline 16 years

“You know, sometimes we smoke a lot here and drink whisky to be tough” Linda 16 years.

On the contrary, their daily life becomes a sum of depression and anguish, lack of self- esteem, auto devaluation, introversion and guilt.

“I felt dirty; I was ashamed; and I knew it was the rule in town” TH 16 years

Social imbalances

Child trafficking for sexual exploitation leads to imbalances that can perturbate harmony in a society. Among others, there are school abandonment, compromising children education, school dismissal; loss of cultural values, family disorganisation, development of prostitution, more street children, unwanted pregnancies, extra uterus pregnancies, abortion, lack of parental affection for the victims...

VICTIMS

TESTIMONIES

I went out with my friend and another girl. We went to Ekounou and at around 4:30am; we came back to Mvog Ada at Carrefour de la joie. When going back, an army man came. He told me that he loved me and wanted to offer me a drink. He also told me that he was with a woman. She was an elderly woman, fair in complexion. She had no hair and had a long wig, Rasta falling down up her buttocks. At that time I was still very young. It was in 2002. The woman came; she told us that she wanted to take us to Bafoussam in the evening. She took us to a hotel in Nkoldongo where we took a bath and had something to eat. It is from there that, I don't know, I lost my memory

Well, we arrived in Bafoussam, I woke up. It was cold there. She took us to an abandoned house like the 'Immeuble de la Mort' in Yaoundé with a basement. In the basement, there was a big snack bar where girls danced naked; she said to us "I have brought you here because I want you to work for me". We refused and she said you have no choice; it is a must! We stayed there 3 months; we danced but later on we escaped"

Pauline 16years



« My aunt brought me from Awai my village; I was living with my grand mother; she came all the time and kept clothes, shoes and many other things for me. One day I told her: "Aunty, I would like to go to town with you ».

Later on, she came and told my grand mother that she would take me with her for the holidays and that if everything went on well, I would go to school there. I had passed my exam to go to Form IV and I was happy. I was no longer enjoying staying in the village. Some of my friends who had gone to town had become beautiful. So when she said I was going with her, I was so happy.

When we got to her place; I first noticed that it was one room and I asked her "Aunty is there only one room?" "Yes, she said; "while waiting to get more money to rent an apartment, we will stay here. With your arrival, we will have more money"

I did not understand how my presence will bring more money. We chatted for a long time and around 10pm she said "get dressed, we are going out; a friend has invited me".

She had already selected what I would wear. I was happy; the clothes were sexy and very beautiful. She taught me how to make up. I was beautiful; I was happy and I loved her more. When we got there, the man received us well, gave us something to drink and some roasted chicken to eat. He was a father, an elderly man who could be 60 years old. But since my aunt was more than 40, I told myself, "Ah! He should be her boy friend. Anyway there is not much difference between them; they even match". At a given time, the man came to sit next to me and told me I was very beautiful. I was a bit shy. But my aunt said "don't be afraid, this is a very good man; if you are kind to him, he will do many good things to you. He has a lot of money and he has already sent a lot of young girls like you to Europe to continue their studies."

Later on, he invited us to a night club and we went to Printemps. It wasn't even a night club; it was a bar where girls danced naked. I had never seen that before. When going back the man took us to his house. When we got in, my aunt whispered in my ear that I should stay and sleep with the man. I started crying and I refused. She scolded me saying: "what do you think I do to be able to live here? How do you think you are going to pay for your studies? When I brought things to you in the village, do you think I picked them up somewhere? Please don't put me into trouble with my friend. We promised each other things; just do what he asks you to do." Then she went away. Since we had already drunk a lot, I was tired. I did not even know what the man did to me. I was sleepy. But I recalled that we slept together; I had had sex before but never with such an old man. In the morning he gave me Fcfa 20 000 and said my aunt had already got her own share. But stupid as I was, I told my aunt he gave me Fcfa 20 000 and she took it all. I felt dirty, I was ashamed but during the day, as other young girls came to visit my aunt, I understood through our discussions that this lifestyle was usual in town"

Marie, 15 years.

It's a long story; I cannot tell it to you here. You can call me Linda. I don't know, anyway, as you wish. My guys are looking at me; I like talking much. I don't feel like.... it's a cousin of mine who left the village long ago; she lived in Yaoundé and one day she came to tell me that one of her friends had opened a bar and I could come and work there.

Since my grandmother had not much money to send me to school, I had to come here to work. So, I have been a waitress here for 2 years. Sometimes there are customers who want to take us along, but I don't know how they go about it. The boss makes the arrangements; he tells us to go with the customer and we will get something in return. Since I know nobody here, I work here and I do all what he asks me to do. At the end of the month he increases the salary of those who have worked well. He sometimes pays Fcfa 20 000 or F cfa 30.000 per month; it depends...there are some customers who give us some money, especially when we did it well!

When I had just come, it wasn't easy. He asked me to go with a customer and I refused. To me, my objective there

was work. He scolded me, he threatened me, he said I wanted to send his customers away and that if I continued, he would send me away. Since I was afraid, I did not want to go back to the village. I am already used to it ; You know sometimes we smoke a lot here and drink whisky to have courage; sometimes , customers force us to do strange things and when you don't agree they get angry; but since I don't want to have problems with my boss, sometimes I accept but... My dreams, I don't know...I only want to get married, have children, find a job! I would like to go far away from my boss, far away from the people who work with me. You know, my boss has many relationships, he knows many people; so if you make a mistake, they will arrest you; he knows people everywhere in Cameroon. So one cannot go like that; he doesn't want us to go out any how; moreover, he does not want people to know what is happening here"

Linda 16 years



There is an elder brother of the neighbourhood who came and told me that they had opened a bar in Yaoundé and that I could work there and earn some money. That's why I came here in Yaoundé. For my first man, my boss assured me that he was good man; that he could help me if I keep a good relationship with him. They negotiated together and then...later...we did what we could do but it did not last because I had to go back to work and report to my boss.... Yes, it's the boss who always put us in contact with customers. Sometimes some customers will give us their telephone numbers but the boss does not want us to manage alone since he is the one who generally negotiates. We cannot refuse because that's the way it is; he sometimes gives us things, some drugs and we cannot distinguish what is good from what is bad. Sometimes some customers are violent and they threaten to beat you and do other things, but it is not easy for them because our boss watches out and protects us. There are always people who walk along with us and when it is too bad we can always call or flash their phones.

I would like to have a household and children and all, but for the time being I don't see it coming because anytime I wanted to resign they fetched me and found me; since I know many of their secrets..."

anonymous victim; 17 years



A Customer testimony

I don't like coming here, girls are too dirty, but what is interesting is that there are very young and beautiful chicks. We try to help these young girls; I treat them smoothly but others are violent. You know, I can't do any harm to these young girls just like that; they have the same age like my grandchildren. Before sleeping with a girl, I give something to the tenant and after I can give something to the girl for her taxi. But as I told you I like helping them, so I give more money to these girls; they know me; I pay them well. What attracts me in these girls is paternal instinct; they are so fragile and so sweet that I desire them and then, you know...they are sweeter than old ladies! What you know is that, when you are with a young girl, you have exciting sensations, you feel renewed, you feel good! Personally, I prefer young girls. Have you been to PRINTEMPS or MERCURE? It's is too exciting there. You see girls dancing with full breasts. It's true my second wife is young but not as young as these ones. I think she is 30 years old now; I married her when she was 17, she was still fresh ; even now she still is but ... I can still get married to a 3rd one ; I don't lack money ! There is money! If a girl behaves well I can marry her...."

A polygamous trader, about 60 years old

ACTORS AND METHODS



Child trafficking for sexual exploitation has visible and invisible actors, networks and strategies are well elaborated and well maintained.

Actors are of various types:

Exploiters and traffickers (intermediaries)

They are those who develop strategies daily for the recruitment of children and the most ignominious exploitation methods irrespective of the disastrous and destructive impact of their activities on victims. Generally, employers have a clear authority on victims. They find, gather the children and negotiate their recruitment.

Accomplices

They are generally hotel and motel, guest houses, snack bars tenants and some families. They are solicited in the child sexual exploitation process by offering occasionally, temporarily or definitely a venue for exploitation. They earn a lot of money in this business. There are also bus drivers and control services at the borders that facilitate the child trafficking phase.

Infant prostitution's customers

Infant prostitution's customers have no specific profile. They come from all socio professional categories and all milieus.

Parents

In Cameroon, having children is considered as wealth.

Some people want to capitalise it in order to get out of a difficult life. Children are therefore used to diminish difficulties in life that has become tougher.

In some urban centres, some parents encourage their daughters to prostitute themselves in order to be able to meet ends, not mentioning that the product of this activity may be in some cases, the only source of revenue for the household. Most of the time parents do not wish to insert their children in child trafficking networks nor subject them to sexual exploitation. They may be victims of crooks who deceive them and benefit from their credulity while promising to offer a better alternative to their off springs.

Children

They are the victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation which goes with violence and destructions.

Enrolment methods also vary:

Placement of a child by his own parents

In this case, the child is given away to a person (friend, family member) whose task will be to find work for him or ensure his education. The person will sexually exploit the child under his authority.

A commercial exchange

After a bargaining, intermediaries and parents conclude their business. That's where the monstrous phenomenon begins.

Fake job offer presented by traffickers

A trafficker goes to villages to recruit children directly from their parents. He appears as a benefactor who will take the child under his protection, thus doing a favour to the family. Sometimes the trafficker talks directly to children. He convinces them to follow him promising to give them a paid job, a professional training or material rewards.

“Voluntary” enrolment of the child himself

The child leaves his village to look for a job. He moves freely to destination. Usually, he does not know his final destination, neither the type of job he will be offered nor the type of conditions he will have to fulfil.

Persuasion by former victims who have become intermediaries/recruiters

A child victim of trafficking and sexual exploitation can rapidly become a member of that network ending up as a professional trafficker himself. When he returns to the village, he can be highly persuasive because he lives abroad or earns a salary.

Child abduction

Traffickers use force, threats and drugs to kidnap children in streets and public places.

Internet

Internet is a recruitment technique that traffickers use in international trafficking.

Many young girls visit the Web to look for white men who will marry them and get them out of poverty. Announcements are generally traps for young girls looking for husbands and young men looking for training.

Methods in child sexual exploitation are also varied.

Street prostitution

Children in Cameroon are mostly sexually exploited in this form of prostitution. It is mostly spread because traffickers

remain in the background. Their activities are less visible by authorities and neighbours than those of people who own closed houses. Further more, with street prostitution costs are less expensive than



other types of sexual exploitation linked to prostitution. Movements of children looking for customers are limited within a geographic area that is well controlled by exploiters. These children then offer their services in well identified places. It means that, although they wander in streets to look for customers, children that are victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation are not mistaken as prostitutes.

Prostitution linked to commercial exploitation

This refers to a form of child exploitation in snack bars, night clubs, cafés, and restaurants. That is the most hidden form of prostitution because what people see first is the commercial activity going on. But waiters and waitresses are also meant for customers who are ready to pay for sexual services they require from these employees. They are compelled to dress up in a sexy way that will attract men and seduce them.

Children striptease is also another form of sexual exploitation. After exposing their nakedness in public, interested customers pay to the boss for sexual intercourse with a child.

“Closed home” prostitution

They are ordinary homes whose doors and windows are always closed. Inside the houses, some women have permanent sexual activities. In Douala for example, a survey revealed an intense activity of procuring led by a Nigerian. He owns a closed home near Akwa where he sexually exploits young girls and young boys coming from his country.

Luxury prostitution

Luxury prostitution is practised in great establishments, high standing hotels and private homes. Exploiters use intermediaries who offer their services to target potential customers. Once the negotiation and price are concluded, the child is discretely delivered to the customer at the right address. The dirty activity is completed in total discretion.

Forced marriage

In some regions of Cameroon, particularly the North West and the North, it often happens that a man gives his girl child to marriage in order to pay a debt. These are generally young adolescent and immature girls. The so called husband sometimes transforms the girl into a commercial good, whose sexual services are offered to some identified customers.

HOW CAN WE BRING CHANGE?



Child trafficking system stands on a trilogy, authors-children-customers. The customers constitute the essential link that keeps the problem going on. The ignorance of the role played by the customer enforces mechanisms that legitimate his impunity. Since he is the one who pays more and more expensive bills to satisfy his foolish instincts, he should be the one to punish in a bid to eradicate it. Unfortunately prostitution remains unpunished and flourishes, in the light of a popular legal saying which stipulates that "what is not punished by the law is permitted"

The legislator leaves space for customers to exercise their overflowing and dangerous libido. The WHO once stated that "the greatest danger for women and young girls is male sexuality."

Occasional initiatives from non governmental actors

Civil society organisations have occasionally carried out actions against child trafficking for sexual exploitation without focussing exclusively on the issue. These actions range from psycho-social follow-up of victims, legal assistance meant to sue the exploiter, and mass sensitisation campaigns. Many of such programmes have been implemented by Cameroon NGOs (NKUMU FED association in Bamenda, in the North West, Enfance, Jeunes Avenir (ASSEJA) in Yaoundé.

Amongst international partners, there are the United Nations bodies, more specifically, UNICEF, ILO, and the RED CROSS that work for the protection of childhood. Though these programmes are efficient and beneficial, they are like a drop of water in the ocean as they can not tackle the problem from its roots. Lacks of specialised actors on the field and lack of financial means limit the impact of all the efforts and expertise that are being put in against child trafficking for sexual exploitation.

What is already done; mitigated actions

The fight against child trafficking for sexual exploitation remains a preoccupation for the state of Cameroon. Its commitment in the fight remains weak, mainly for two reasons:

An incomplete legal process

Although Cameroon has ratified many international conventions relating to children rights, it has committed itself to fight against this serious problem by promulgating law n°2005/015 of 29 December 2005 relating to the fight against child trafficking and exploitation in Cameroon. But material and financial means do not follow. In addition, the law is not specific to child trafficking and sexual exploitation only. An analysis on the States legal measures clearly shows more protection for the victims and less punishment for their bullies. Measures taken by public administrations are

mostly of post aggression nature that leads to a lack of preventive mobilisation. It is worth mentioning that the law considers as a whole both child trafficking for economic exploitation and for sexual exploitation. Whereas, each aspect of the problem has its specificities and should be treated differently.

Child trafficking for sexual exploitation, being inhumane and degrading, deserves a particular attention from the legislator. He should determine the profile of all the actors in the process for a better protection.

Impunity of some of the actors (in particular, customers) of child prostitution

The virus we must all fight which everyone seems to ignore is the customer. Both the criminal Code and the 2005 law relating to child trafficking do not punish prostitution business.



What is to be done : concrete actions

What should we do to fight against child trafficking and sexual exploitation and make a breakthrough? It would be advisable to take actions in four complementary lines:

Inform and raise public awareness

- The population first

This is the first step of our action, in the sense that it is the introductory strategy that would help influence the negative behaviour of people inclined to child trafficking for sexual exploitation. Actually, the sex taboo must be eliminated. In Africa sex taboo somehow makes sex sacred in such a way that public speeches avoid the issue. The aim here is also to discourage the popular belief that only immigration at the national or international level can help improve one's social status.

- Leaders next

Actions towards those who guarantee and protect children's rights, that is decision makers, should be oriented in two different ways:

Decision makers will be congratulated for initiatives taken against child trafficking for sexual exploitation. On the other hand they should understand that they ought to elaborate and implement protective regulations

that take into account aspects relating to customers involved in child prostitution and measures to follow up victims as stated in the Palermo protocol.

Hotels, restaurants, inns and chicken parlours managers, at last

As they can not resist to financial proposals from traffickers, managers of these structures and their employees easily accommodate child sexual exploitation, despite regulations. To avoid such disastrous behaviour, it is important to call upon these economic operators; in order to inform them about the risks they take in engaging themselves in such shady deals. They should get involved in the fight against child trafficking for sexual exploitation so as to denounce exploiters who solicit their services. Their parental consciousness should also be called upon.



Denounce and punish

- Authors and accomplices

Authors and accomplices of child trafficking, exploiters and professional traffickers, develop recruitment strategies every day. They use the services of hotel, motel, bar and restaurant managers who temporarily or occasionally offer their structures in return for money. They should be denounced and severely punished.

Prostitution favouritism must also be considered as a crime against the criminal law and should be sanctioned. Customers, whoever they are, should be denounced and severely punished. The same treatment should be given to parents who, by gestures or speech, push their children to the streets and order them to bring back something to eat. Some also give away a child to a relative and do not follow up. Such parents and procurer should be tracked and punished.

Caring for victims of trafficking

Victims of trafficking should be medically taken care of and be socially inserted.

Medical and psychological follow-up

Children who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation need a medical follow-up provided by competent public and private services. They should also be followed up psychologically, through counselling and development of self-esteem, necessary for overcoming pains and for reconstruction;

Rehabilitation and re-integration

Once children overcome their trauma, it is important to put them in a process of social re-integration by

reinforcing their capacities in elaborating and setting up income generating micro projects, by inserting them into a profession, by helping them to learn a trade, by providing them with education.

Reinforce the legal framework against child trafficking for sexual exploitation

By setting up a national coordination of actions against child trafficking for sexual exploitation, we propose that the 2005 Law should be reinforced with the creation of a multidisciplinary organism with specialised units that will specifically be in charge of its application. Its missions will be the following:

- take measures to effectively reduce child trafficking for sexual exploitation
- adopt and implement measures for the protection of witnesses
- establish communication and research means in collaboration with international cooperation
- take care, supervise, control and coordinate the rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of trafficking
- track and sue traffickers and their accomplices
- Take complementary measures.

Apart from the 2005 Law which is the main instrument to fight child trafficking, other measures can be taken by public authorities:

- Sign a decree for the implementation of the law which will clearly indicate terms and conditions for the recognition,

the adoption and movement of immature children within and out of the country with an obligation to require parent's signature;

- Systematically establish birth certificates and ID cards to children born in Cameroon;

- give the possibility to NGOs and associations to stand as plaintiff in court for existing or pending cases, with removal of legal fees and an immediate trial.

- Make obligatory the reports all cases of child trafficking, if need be, this will be considered as non assistance to a child in danger;

- create a court for children;

- make education compulsory for all children up to the class of form IV, with assistance at school reopening for school material;

- organise training for childcare professionals in order to detect, recognise, prevent and signal cases of trafficking.





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