

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	202
Land:	Cameroun
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cameroon
Udgivet:	25. juni 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	4. november 2020

Document #2036234

USDOS – US Department of State

2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cameroon

CAMEROON: Tier 2 Watch List

The Government of the Republic of Cameroon does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included investigating at least nine suspected trafficking cases, identifying 77 victims, and providing training to some officials and teachers on trafficking indicators. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. Government security forces allegedly recruited a minor to gather intelligence. Additionally, officials prosecuted and convicted fewer trafficking crimes. The government did not disseminate its standard operating procedures on victim identification and referral to law enforcement or first responders and did not pass draft anti-trafficking legislation from 2012 that conforms to international law. Therefore Cameroon was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Government forces immediately cease recruiting and using child soldiers, investigate alleged cases, and prosecute complicit officers following due process. • Train law enforcement and NGO personnel on the National Referral System and Standard Operating Procedures (NRS/SOP) on victim identification and referral to increase first responders’ ability to proactively identify internal trafficking cases as well as cross-border trafficking as distinct from smuggling. • Expand training for law enforcement, judicial officials, and social workers on the anti-trafficking section of the penal code as well as victim-centered approaches to increase effective trafficking investigations and prosecutions, while respecting the rule of law and human rights, and administer fair and just sentences to those convicted. • Increase formal collaboration with NGOs on proactively identifying and protecting victims. • Regularly convene the anti-trafficking inter-ministerial committee (IMC) and include NGOs and international organizations working to address trafficking in persons in Cameroon. • Amend anti-trafficking laws to remove the requirement of force, fraud, or coercion for child sex trafficking offenses and to make a clear distinction between trafficking and smuggling. • Publicize information to citizens on their rights as foreign workers and sources of assistance while abroad. • Investigate labor recruiters and agencies suspected of fraudulent recruitment—including unlicensed recruiters and intermediaries—and prosecute those complicit in trafficking.

PROSECUTION

The government decreased its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The 2011 anti-trafficking law criminalized some forms of sex trafficking and all forms of labor trafficking. Inconsistent with international law, Cameroon’s law required a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion to constitute a child sex trafficking offense, and therefore did not criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking. The law prescribed penalties of 10 to 20 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 to 1 million Central African francs (CFA) (\$86 to \$1,730), which were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. If the trafficking offense involved a victim who was 15 years old or younger, the penalties increased to 15 to 20 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 100,000 to 10 million CFA (\$173 to \$17,300). The law prescribed separate penalties for debt bondage, which ranged from five to 10 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 to 500,000 CFA (\$17 to \$865) and were also sufficiently stringent. The law was published in French and English, the two official languages of the government. The English version conflated trafficking in persons and smuggling offenses by referring to trafficking in persons offenses, as defined under international law, as “slavery in persons,” while referring to smuggling-related offenses as “trafficking in persons.” Increasing the potential for conflating smuggling and trafficking in persons, Article 342 of Cameroon’s 2016 Penal Code prohibited both “trafficking in persons” and “slavery in persons.” Legislation drafted in 2012 to address victim and witness protection and correct inconsistencies with international law remained pending for the eighth consecutive year.

The government did not provide comprehensive law enforcement statistics, but officials reported investigating at least nine potential trafficking cases and prosecuting seven suspected traffickers in 2019. In the previous reporting period, the government reported investigating eight potential trafficking cases and prosecuting 126 suspected traffickers. The government reported convicting five traffickers in 2019—sentencing traffickers to verdicts between 12 months' to 20 years' imprisonment, compared with convicting 13 traffickers in 2018. Officials did not report the outcome of an investigation into a complicit official opened in 2018.

Ongoing insecurity in the Far North Region, as well as armed conflict in the Northwest and Southwest Regions between the government and Anglophone separatists, hindered the government's law enforcement efforts due to the closure of courts and lack of official access in some areas. Some regional courts and NGOs encouraged victims to settle trafficking cases outside of court in part because of insufficient cooperation between the government and NGOs and weak judicial administration.

The government did not report implementing or disseminating its standard operating procedures on victim identification and referral to law enforcement or first responders. Over the course of the reporting period, the government conducted six anti-trafficking seminars for an unknown number of police and sent two officers to participate in train-the-trainer sessions to combat trafficking in Lyon, Nairobi, and Abuja; officials did not note whether these officers then trained other law enforcement members. The government electronically disseminated its anti-trafficking law to approximately 15,000 law enforcement officers in January 2020. General Delegation for National Security officials reported training 25 teachers on trafficking indicators who then communicated that information to an unknown number of vulnerable children, including IDPs from the Northwest and Southwest Regions. During the previous reporting period, the government coordinated with international organizations to obtain anti-trafficking training for more than 37 law enforcement officials but did not directly train prosecutors, judges, or first responders. Because many law enforcement and judicial officials lack knowledge of the crime, some trafficking offenses may have been tried as child abuse or kidnapping, which carried lesser penalties.

PROTECTION

The government increased efforts to identify victims. Although the government did not maintain comprehensive statistics, officials reported identifying at least 77 potential victims, compared with identifying 62 potential victims during the previous reporting period. In 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) reported identifying 1,147 street children vulnerable to trafficking. MINAS reported identifying 877 vulnerable street children throughout Cameroon in 2018.

NGOs reported thousands of Cameroonian workers remained in Middle Eastern countries, and many of these workers were at risk of traffickers exploiting them in domestic servitude or sex trafficking. During the reporting period, the government reported repatriating an unknown number of potential trafficking victims from the Maghreb and Middle East. The government repatriated at least 14 trafficking victims during the previous reporting period.

While the government developed a NRS/SOP in 2013 to guide officials in proactive identification and referral of trafficking victims, it did not implement the NRS/SOP nor did it report training officials on the measures. MINAS had the authority to admit children subjected to abuse—including trafficking victims—to government institutions for vulnerable children, which offered shelter, food, medical and psychological care, education, vocational training, and family tracing. However, the government did not report referring victims of trafficking to these facilities during the reporting period. Private centers funded by NGOs and regulated by MINAS provided care for an unknown number of child victims. The government did not offer trafficking-specific services for adult or child victims but did provide services to minors at risk of trafficking along with other vulnerable children.

The government did not have a formal policy to encourage victims to participate in investigations or prosecutions of their traffickers and did not report providing counseling, legal support, or any other assistance to victims who testified during court proceedings. The government did not report providing protection for victims cooperating with trafficking investigations in spite of experts claiming trafficking networks repeatedly threatened victims during their trials. While there were no reports the government penalized any trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, some victims may have remained unidentified in the law enforcement system due to the limited use of the NRS/SOP and understanding of the crime among officials. The government could grant temporary residency status to foreign victims who, if deported, may face hardship or retribution; however, it did not report providing this accommodation during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts. A lack of coordination and funding continued to impede the government's implementation of the 2017-2019 anti-trafficking national action plan. The IMC convened twice in 2019, compared to once in 2018.

MINAS continued its public awareness campaign during the reporting period directed towards the general public and vulnerable children to inform Cameroonians on trafficking indicators. Officials stated the government conducted 2,864 informational sessions in 2019 and reached 397,447 Cameroonians, compared to approximately 69,000 in 2018.

NGOs stated police and immigration officials’ screening efforts at Douala’s international airport prevented some potential victims from pursuing exploitative employment in the Middle East; the government’s enforcement efforts diverted some vulnerable job seekers to Lagos, Nigeria, where screening procedures were less stringent. In March 2020, the Ministry of External Relations began requiring Cameroonians seeking work visas in Lebanon to first gain the approval of the Cameroonian Honorary Consulate in Lebanon. The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MINEFOP), in conjunction with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, monitored formal labor recruiters and denied the accreditation of 10 labor recruitment firms for violations potentially related to trafficking, issued warnings to 16 temporary employment placement firms suspected of human trafficking, and suspended nine firms for trafficking-related concerns. MINEFOP officials reported annually publishing a list of licensed recruitment agencies, although the scope of dissemination was unknown. MINEFOP reported it does not have a system to prevent traffickers from exploiting workers once they have been placed in overseas employment. Increasing their vulnerability to trafficking, Cameroonians frequently used unauthorized recruiters to seek employment abroad. In January 2020, MINAS launched a two-year research project with an international organization to ascertain the scope of human trafficking within the country, although the government did not communicate taking any concrete actions by the end of the rating period. Between 2015 and 2017, a Cameroonian diplomat posted in the United States allegedly engaged in visa fraud related to a minor female domestic worker. Because of diplomatic immunity, the United States could not commence prosecution, nor did the government report taking any action during the reporting period to hold the diplomat accountable. The diplomat left the United States in 2018.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Cameroon, and traffickers exploit victims from Cameroon abroad. Government officials and NGO representatives stated the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions increased the risk factors of human trafficking during the reporting period due to large numbers of displaced individuals, diminished police and judicial presence, and deteriorated economic and educational conditions. Child traffickers often use the promise of education or a better life in urban areas to convince rural parents to entrust their children to intermediaries, who then exploit the children in sex trafficking or forced labor. Criminals force homeless children and orphans into sex trafficking and forced labor in urban areas. Some labor recruiters lure teenagers and adolescents from economically disadvantaged families to cities with the prospect of employment and then subject victims to labor or sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit Cameroonian children in domestic service, restaurants, and begging or vending on streets and highways. Additionally, criminal elements force Cameroonian children to labor in artisanal gold mining, gravel quarries, fishing, animal breeding, and agriculture (on onion, cotton, tea, and cocoa plantations), as well as in urban transportation assisting bus drivers and in construction as errand boys, laborers, or night watchmen. Observers note child sex tourists exploit minors in the cities of Kribi and Douala, with Ugandan, Chadian, Nigerian, Tanzanian, German, French, Swiss, and Belgian nationals primarily committing this crime.

Foreign business owners and herders force children from neighboring countries including Chad, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Benin, and Equatorial Guinea to labor in spare parts shops or cattle grazing in northern Cameroon; many traffickers share the nationality of their victims. Traffickers exploit some children transiting the country en route to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Anecdotal evidence suggests some Chinese business owners fraudulently recruit young girls to work as beauticians and subsequently exploit them in sex trafficking. Experts reported Turkish and Chinese officials in Cameroon may facilitate transnational human trafficking by granting visas to Africans with little oversight. Cameroonian banks may have assisted criminal networks involved in fraudulent recruitment by validating income and employment oversight requirements, as well as opening “ghost” bank accounts for victims to demonstrate false income levels.

Observers reported there were approximately 977,000 IDPs in Cameroon at the beginning of 2020, an increase from 437,000 in 2018. In addition to IDPs, there were approximately 408,000 refugees in the country—including those from Nigeria—as of January 31, 2020. Traffickers may prey on both IDPs and refugees due to their economic instability and sometimes-limited access to formal justice. Boko Haram’s activities on the border with Nigeria continued to displace many of these refugees. There continued to be reports of hereditary slavery in northern chiefdoms. An expert reported government security forces recruited and used a minor to gather intelligence in the country’s Anglophone regions. Some community neighborhood watch groups, known as vigilance committees, may also have used and recruited children as young as age 12 in operations against Boko Haram, although there is no evidence of the government providing material support to these specific groups. Boko Haram is a consistent terrorist threat, and continues to forcibly recruit Cameroonian children as porters, cooks, and scouts. The terrorist organization also uses women and girls as

forced suicide bombers and sex slaves and boys as child soldiers. Observers reported Anglophone separatists recruited and used child soldiers in the Southwest and Northwest Regions, both for fighting government forces and for gathering intelligence.

Traffickers exploit Cameroonians from disadvantaged social strata, in particular from rural areas, in forced labor and sex trafficking in the Middle East (especially Kuwait and Lebanon), as well as in Europe (including Switzerland and Cyprus), the United States, and multiple African countries (including Benin and Nigeria). Most exploited Cameroonians abroad are between the ages of 20 and 38 and come from the Northwest, Southwest, Littoral, Center, South, and West Regions. Fraudulent labor brokers recruited some Cameroonian women for domestic work in the Middle East where traffickers then subjected the women to sex trafficking or domestic servitude upon arrival at their destination. Some economic migrants in search of opportunity became victims of trafficking in Libya or while in transit through Niger. NGOs reported Nigerians in eastern Nigeria exploited Cameroonian refugees displaced by the Anglophone conflict in forced labor and sex trafficking.

Trafficking networks generally consist of local community members, including religious leaders and former trafficking victims who have transitioned to perpetrators. These networks advertise jobs through the internet and other media, and recruit and sell other Cameroonians directly to families in need of domestic servants. Advocates working on trafficking issues report the government's awareness-raising activities targeting fraudulent recruitment have raised awareness amongst vulnerable populations but have caused intermediaries to operate with greater discretion, often directing victims to travel to the Middle East through neighboring countries, including Nigeria. International organizations, NGOs, and migrants report Cameroonian trafficking networks in Morocco coerce women into commercial sex.

ecoi.net summary:



Annual report on
trafficking in persons (covering
April 2019 to March 2020)

Country:

Cameroon

Source:

[USDOS – US Department of
State](#)

Original link:

[https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-
trafficking-in-persons-
report/cameroon/](https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/cameroon/)

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

25 June 2020

Document ID:

2036234

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
Imprint & Disclaimer
F.A.Q.
Data Protection Notice

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

