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1 June 2022

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Cameroon: Domestic violence, including legislation; support services available to victims, including mental health services; the impact of COVID19; state protection (2020–April 2022)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

Sources report that domestic violence in Cameroon is "widespread" (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022, 14; Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. G3). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that [HRW English version] "[d]iscrimination against women" is "prevalent" in Cameroon, and that domestic violence is "endemic" (HRW 13 Jan. 2022).

The information in the following table was provided in the latest demographic survey from 2018 conducted by the government in partnership with the ICF [1] as part of its Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program:

Percentage of people aged 15 49 in union or in [translation] "union breakdown" who have experienced domestic violence in the form of physical, sexual or emotional violence

	"at some point"	in the last 12 months
Female	44%	32%
Male	33%	22%

(NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, ii, 394).

The same source adds that 28 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 surveyed, and 29 percent of men in the same age group, believe [translation] "that a man is justified in beating his wife for at least one of the five reasons cited," namely

- "burning food" (8 percent of women, 6 percent of men)
- "arguing" with their husband (15 percent of women, 14 percent of men)
- going out without telling their husband (15 percent of women, 15 percent of men)
- "neglecting the children" (22 percent of women, 24 percent of men)
- "refusing to have sexual intercourse with him" (10 percent of women, 8 percent of men) (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 343, 350)

According to a survey on violence against women during the COVID19 pandemic conducted by the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) between April and September 2021 in 13 countries, including Cameroon, with at least 1,200 respondents in each country, the responses from women interviewed in Cameroon can be summarized as follows:

- 30 percent reported the occurrence or threat of physical violence at home
- 25 percent reported being hurt by other adults in the household
- 19 percent responded that other women in the household have been hurt
- 16 percent reported that COVID19 has made conflict between adults in the household more frequent
- 38 percent reported that physical or verbal abuse by a spouse/partner has increased during the pandemic (UN 17 Dec. 2021, 3, 4, 11, 12, 15).

According to a report on a survey on the gendered impact of COVID19 in Cameroon, conducted through an online questionnaire from 6 to 20 May 2020 by UN Women in collaboration with the Cameroonian government [2], the COVID19

pandemic [translation] "increases tensions within households and, consequently, the risks of domestic violence" (MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 4, 20). In the same survey, 35.8 percent of respondents reported that they saw an [translation] "increase" in violence in their own household, an increase that "may," according to the report, result from "restricted mobility, diminished financial resources, and anxiety among populations" (MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 21). The following table shows the proportion of UN Women survey respondents who reported an increase in each type of domestic violence:

	Men	Women	Overall
Economic violence [3]	18.0%	12.2%	15.3%
Psychological violence	16.2%	16.5%	16.4%
Physical violence	2.7%	4.3%	3.4%
Sexual violence	1.7%	2.0%	1.8%

(MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 21–22).

1.1 Regional Differences

The 2018 demographic survey reports that in the 12 months prior to the survey, the percentage of women aged 15–49 in a union or in union breakdown who have experienced domestic violence is 33.3 percent in rural areas and 29.6 percent in urban areas (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 412).

The following table shows the percentage of men and women aged 15–49 [translation] "currently in a union or in union breakdown" and who have experienced domestic violence by their current or most recent husband or partner, disaggregated by region [for regions whose statistics are based on a minimum of 50 cases]:

Domestic violence by region [4]

	Men	Women
Adamawa	16.7%	25.9%
Centre (without Yaoundé)	65.5%	63.9%

	Men	Women
Douala	27.5%	43.7%
East	38.3%	53.1%
Far North [Extreme North]	10.2%	27.1%
Littoral (without Douala)	23.0%	46.9%
North	32.1%	43.9%
Northwest	not available	47.5%
West	35.0%	54.7%
South	22.0%	51.5%
Southwest	not available	41.0%
Yaoundé	46.4%	44.0%

(NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 414, 415).

According to the humanitarian needs analysis of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), of the 1,823 cases of gender-based violence recorded in 2021 in the Far North region, "[c]lose to" 70 to 75 percent were committed by intimate partners (UN Apr. 2022, 34–35).

According to a report published as part of the Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) [5], women living in the Southwest and Northwest regions [English-speaking regions where a conflict is ongoing (NRC 4 June 2019)] report that they are [UN English version] "more affected" by domestic violence (UN Oct. 2019, 2). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Rural Women Center for Education and Development Cameroon (RuWCED) [6] indicated that "in most" of Ngoketunjia division [located in the Northwest Region], family violence, "especially when perpetrated by the man, is still seen as a normal thing" and that family members in whom survivors confide about their experience "often judg[e]" them (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

In an article published in the *International Journal of New Economics and Social Sciences* on the sociocultural and religious environment that influences popular perceptions of domestic violence in the department of Mezam [in the

Northwest Region], author Eugene Muambah Muntoh, a PhD student in the history department at the University of Yaoundé (Muntoh Aug. 2020, 154), reports that due to cultural norms that are more favourable to men in a marriage, "most" women face "powerful obstacles" that hinder their ability to leave violent relationships (Muntoh 31 Dec. 2020, 115–116). The same source adds that the "stigmatization" of divorced women [7] by society and the loss of the "respect" and "dignity" accorded by their married status were among the factors that led them to "accept and tolerate" domestic violence (Muntoh 31 Dec. 2020, 118). Similarly, the RuWCED, which operates in the Northwest Region, noted that when survivors of domestic violence speak up, "most" family members "blame them for disgracing their families or for exposing their families to public stigma"; these reactions "support the perpetrator" and prompt survivors to accept that violence is "normal" (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). In its 2022 humanitarian needs overview, the OCHA reports that the risk of gender-based violence has increased as a result of the security situation and displacement in regions affected by "crises" (UN Apr. 2022, 34). The same source notes that the socioeconomic fallout from the crises, combined with the "discriminatory norms and practices" that already existed in culture and tradition, means that women and girls are the "main victims" of domestic violence, rape, child marriage and sexual exploitation (UN Apr. 2022, 34).

1.2 SocioEconomic Differences

According to the RuWCED, in addition to social "stigma" for survivors and their families, "most" women from socioeconomically "disadvantaged" backgrounds endure domestic violence because they are economically dependent on their spouses (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). The OCHA reports that in the Northwest and Southwest regions, job loss and the inability to provide for their family, as well as a sense of loss of their social role, has led some men to "transfer their frustration" to female family members in the form of physical violence and harassment (UN Apr. 2022, 58).

2. Legislation

Sources report that "[d]iscrimination" against women is incorporated in Cameroonian legislation (HRW 13 Jan. 2022) or in "customary rules" "generally" applied by the justice system (Baker McKenzie [2021], 1).

According to sources, there is no Cameroonian law that prohibits domestic violence (Baker McKenzie [2021], 3; US 12 Apr. 2022, 42; HRW 13 Jan. 2022), and there are no measures for the protection of women who experience it (Baker McKenzie [2021], 1; HRW 13 Jan. 2022). Baker McKenzie, an international law firm that provides business law services (Baker McKenzie n.d.), adds that justice system judges "generally" accept that a man has "disciplinary rights" over his wife (Baker McKenzie [2021], 1–2). According to the fourth periodic report of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), published in March 2019, the use of customary law helps "reinforce inequality" between men and women (UN 25 Mar. 2019, para. 27). In addition, Freedom House reports that under customary law, rapists can escape punishment if the victim "consents" to marriage (Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. G3).

Law No. 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 Relating to the Protection and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities [*Loi n° 2010/002 du 13 avril 2010 portant protection et promotion des personnes handicapées*] provides the following:

[translation]

Section 15:

The State and decentralized territorial governments shall take all necessary measures to prevent disabilities due to:

- domestic violence ... (Cameroon 2010)

Further Cameroonian legislation specific to domestic violence could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.1 International and Regional Instruments

The *Cameroonian Constitution of 1972*, [translation] "amended by Law No. 96/06 of 18 January 1996, amended and supplemented by Law No. 2008/001 of 14 April 2008," stipulates as follows:

[Cameroon English version]

Article 45 – Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement. (Cameroon 1972)

According to a collection of international, regional, and national instruments relating to human rights published by Cameroon's Ministry of Justice in January 2018 and posted on the website of the Prime Minister's Office, instruments on women's rights have been adopted, including the following:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa (Cameroon Jan. 2018, v, vi).

Although there are international instruments ratified by Cameroon that include provisions on domestic violence, according to the Fighting Domestic Violence tool [8] developed by Baker McKenzie, in practice, judges are "usually reluctant" to apply them; there is no available case law in Cameroon regarding domestic violence (Baker McKenzie [2021], 1, 2). According to *Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2022*, which "assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries," despite the ratification of "many" international instruments to eliminate discrimination against women, "[i]n practice, women continue to encounter" socioeconomic and cultural "barriers" (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022, 2, 25).

2.2 National BiJural System

Sources report that Cameroon is governed by a "bi[jural]" justice system, namely the English common law system in English-speaking regions and the French civil law system in French-speaking regions of the country, in addition to "customary" law (Henry Baaboh n.d.; Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015) or "traditional" law (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015; Sunulex.Africa n.d.). Sources report that customary law includes Islamic and Indigenous laws (Henry Baaboh n.d.; Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015). However, sources indicate that ["in most cases" (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015)] the country's newly introduced unitary laws are based on French law (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015; Sunulex.Africa n.d.).

According to a 2015 article by Charles Manga Fombad [9], despite efforts made after the reunification and independence of Cameroon [10] towards "complete" political and legal "unification," the Penal Code, adopted in 1967, is the only "reasonably successful" Cameroonian legislation that "reflects the country's dual legal culture, although it was substantially based on the French

Penal Code" (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015). The same source adds that customary law has "very limited" application in the Anglophone regions, only in rural areas and only if the people in question choose it, while for the Francophone regions, professional lawyers and magistrates are so ubiquitous in customary courts that they "mostly apply modern law rather than customary law" (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015).

2.3 Penal Code

The *Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 Relating to the Penal Code* stipulates as follows:

[Cameroon English version]

SECTION 7: Offence within Territory

1. The criminal law of the Republic shall apply to any act done or omitted within its territory. (Cameroon 2016, bold in original)

According to sources, although domestic violence and marital rape are not criminalized under Cameroonian legislation (US 12 Apr. 2022, 42; UN Apr. 2022, 34), assault is (US 12 Apr. 2022, 42). Baker McKenzie reports that in the absence of a law on domestic violence, survivors may file a complaint for assault under the provisions of the Penal Code for a specific case to be judged in criminal courts (Baker McKenzie [2021], 2). Baker McKenzie indicates that sections 277, 279, 280, 281, 296, 338, 350, 356 and 357 are among the sections that could apply in the Penal Code for the prosecution of domestic or family violence (Baker McKenzie [2021], 12). Under the Penal Code, the aforementioned sections cover the following offences:

[Cameroon English version]

SECTION 277: Grievous Harm

...

SECTION 279: Assault Occasioning Grievous Harm

...

SECTION 280: Simple Harm

...

SECTION 281: Slight Harm

...

SECTION 296: Rape

...

SECTION 338: Assault on Woman with Child

...

SECTION 350: Assault on Children

...

SECTION 356: Forced Marriage

...

SECTION 357: Abuse in respect of Brideprice

(Cameroon 2016, bold in original)

With regard to sexual harassment, the Penal Code stipulates the following:

[Cameroon English version]

SECTION 3021: Sexual Harassment

1. Whoever takes advantage of the authority conferred on him by his position to harass another using orders, threats, constraints or pressure in order to obtain sexual favours, shall be punished with imprisonment for from 6 (six) months to 1 (one) year and with a fine of from CFAF (one hundred thousand) to CFAF 1,000,000 (one million) [C\$207 to C\$2,067].
2. The penalty shall be imprisonment for from one to 3 (three) years where the victim is a minor.
3. The penalty shall be imprisonment for from 3 (three) to 5 (five) years where the offender is in charge of the education of the victim. (Cameroon 2016, bold in original)

3. Application of Legislation

The UN CESCR notes that the information provided by the Cameroonian state on the application of the provisions of the Penal Code in cases of violence against women included no statistics on the number of legal cases or of offenders put on trial and convicted on the basis of such provisions (UN 25 Mar. 2019, para. 46).

Although the Cameroonian constitution guarantees equal rights to men and women, sources report that in practice this principle is not [always (Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. G3)] applied, and women do not have access to the same rights as men (US 12 Apr. 2022, 44; Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. G3). Freedom House reports that cases of domestic violence and rape are "rarely" prosecuted (Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. G3). Similarly, Baker McKenzie indicates that survivors are reluctant to file a complaint with police, as the police do not consider domestic violence a "serious issue" (Baker McKenzie [2021], 1). The same source adds that judges "generally" accept that a man has "disciplinary rights" over his wife, in accordance with customary law (Baker McKenzie [2021], 2, 6).

4. State Protection

4.1 Legal System

According to Freedom House, the judiciary "is subordinate" to the Ministry of Justice, with "corruption and political influence, including by the executive," weakening courts in the country (Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. F1). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* reports that there were "serious problems" with the independence of the judiciary in 2021 (US 12 Apr. 2022, 1). The same source indicates that, for citizens and organizations who experience civil rights violations, civil remedies exist through administrative or legal proceedings but involve "long delays" (US 12 Apr. 2022, 20).

Law No. 2009/004 of 14 April 2009 to Organize Legal Aid [*Loi n° 2009/004 du 14 avril 2009 portant organisation de l'assistance judiciaire*] includes the following provisions:

[translation]

Section 5:

(1) Subject to the provisions of community law, legal aid may be granted on application to the categories of natural persons referred to under this section, whose resources are inadequate to have their rights enforced by a court or to follow up the enforcement of any writ or process of execution previously obtained without such legal aid.

(2) Within the meaning of this section, the following persons shall be considered persons with inadequate resources:

- needy persons, privates of all the ranks during the term of their service;
- persons subject to the flatrate tax;
- persons not featuring under subparagraphs (a) and (b) above but where their resources, initially deemed sufficient, are found inadequate to defray the costs to be borne;
- a spouse with minor children going through the divorce process with no source of income.

...

(4) The resources of the applicant's spouse and those of persons usually residing in his/her home shall equally be taken into account, save where the procedure involves the spouses or the said persons or where there is an objection or divergence of interests arising from the lawsuit and requiring separate assessment of resources.

(5) Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 5(1), (2), (3) and (4) above, legal aid may, as a special measure, be granted to corporate bodies which are unable to pay their court expenses due to inadequate resources.

Section 6:

(1) Notwithstanding cases where judicial proceedings are free, the following persons have a right to legal aid:

...

b) an unemployed person without resources, deserted by their spouse and seeking to be granted alimony and child support by court order;

...

(2) In the cases provided for under this Section, the commission referred to shall verify whether the said conditions mentioned are fulfilled before granting legal aid.

...

Section 7:

Legal aid commissions shall be set up at courts of first instance, high courts, military tribunals, courts of appeal and the Supreme Court. (Cameroon 2009, bold in original)

According to a study conducted by New Human Rights Cameroon (Nouveaux droits de l'homme Cameroun, NDHCameroun), a nonprofit organization advocating for the promotion, defence and enforcement of human rights (NDHCameroun n.d.), pertaining to criminal justice and the effectiveness of

human rights in Cameroon, legal aid is [translation] "little known and inaccessible" by Cameroonians, particularly those living in rural areas, and its application by the "majority" of magistrates is "extremely rare and discriminatory" (NDHCameroun Apr. 2019, 43). The same source indicates that [translation] "approximately" 80 percent of Cameroonians are not aware of the eligibility criteria to access legal aid or its benefits, and that "approximately" 50.5 percent do not know that the law exists (NDHCameroun Apr. 2019, 41).

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the RuWCED:

Regarding the use of state institutions and legal mechanisms to help survivors access justice and government support, prior to the onset of the COVID19 pandemic, the RuWCED had been able to refer cases and "se[e] results" for survivors, and that these institutions and tools "use their available resources" to support those seeking help. Although the RuWCED still collaborates with state institutions, such as the women's affairs ministry and the judiciary, there are various obstacles to doing so, including that these institutions are now "[g]enerally" "only" located in urban areas and are not "readily accessible" to survivors, especially the most vulnerable, who live in rural areas. It also requires "considerable technical support" for survivors to file official complaints and the process is "very slow"; in cases where the perpetrator is financially affluent or has an important cultural or religious position, the cases "hardly ever" progress (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

4.2 Police

According to Baker McKenzie, there is no form of civil protection available to survivors of domestic violence who file a formal complaint, because it is not codified in law, and the police "rarely" intervene (Baker McKenzie [2021], 6, 9). The same source adds that the police consider domestic violence to be a "private" matter and "can" consider the survivor to be responsible for the violence (Baker McKenzie [2021], 9). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In Ngoketunjia division, the RuWCED reported that the legal tools and measures introduced by the government only exist "in theory" and not in practice, due to the armed conflict in the region (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). In addition, the same source added that "at most" 2 percent of survivors go to the police for protection, because of the security crisis (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

4.3 Other Government Measures

Without providing more details on survivors of domestic violence in particular, *US Country Reports 2021* indicates that the government offers the following support measures to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence:

- the "development" of protection policies
- services such as legal support
- "general" health care in health facilities
- data collection through Cameroon's district health information systems and the provision of analysis (US 12 Apr. 2022, 43).

According to the 2018 demographic survey, the 2011–2020 National Gender Policy was implemented to [translation] "ensure" women's equality with men with regard to rights and opportunities to control resources (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 343). Information on the implementation of the National Gender Policy regarding domestic violence could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5. Support Services

Without providing further details on survivors of domestic violence in particular, *US Country Reports 2021* notes that "[m]any" of the prevention and support programs for survivors of gender-based violence were provided by community organizations (US 12 Apr. 2022, 43–44). According to the RuWCED, in Ngoketunjia division, health care services for survivors of domestic violence are "mostly" provided by NGOs (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). The same source indicated that their NGO helps survivors access emergency sexual and reproductive health care services, skills training activities and a "few" shelters homes available "for very extreme cases" (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). The source added that "[t]hose are the only available support services for survivors at the moment" in Ngoketunjia division (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). Baker McKenzie reports that there are no state-operated shelters for survivors of domestic violence (Baker McKenzie [2021], 6).

The 2018 demographic survey indicates that 52 percent of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have not shared their experience with anyone and have never attempted to access help to end such violence (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2022, 399). In addition, the same source adds that survivors of domestic violence who seek help [translation] "mainly" reach out to

members of their own family (68 percent of cases) (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 400). With respect to professional sources of assistance, 2.8 percent of women sought assistance from law enforcement, 1.9 percent from a health professional, 1.9 percent from a social service and 0.4 percent from a legal professional (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 421). The RuWCED indicated that "[in] general" there are "not enough" services available to protect survivors of domestic violence in the country and that there are "very sharp differences" between the experiences of survivors from armed conflict affected regions and those from other regions (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

5.1 Mental Health Services

In its 2021 humanitarian response plan for Cameroon, the OCHA reports that the security crisis in the Far North, Southwest and Northwest regions hampers access to health care, including for the treatment of "psychosocial trauma related to violence, including sexual violence and rape" (UN Mar. 2021, 12). A rapid gender analysis conducted by CARE International from 6 to 23 April 2020 in nine West African countries, including Cameroon, indicates that, prior to the arrival of the COVID19 pandemic, access to mental health services was already limited to urban centres and areas where humanitarian actors intervene, particularly in the centre and far north of Cameroon (CARE International May 2020, 5, 13). The same source indicates that [CARE International English version] "[i]n general," psychologists' services were already "rarely" used by the public "due to strong prejudices" (CARE International May 2020, 13). CARE International reports that the situation has not improved since the start of the pandemic and the reluctance of the population to use any form of health care combined with the reduction of services provided by humanitarian actors in the field has [CARE International English version] "further decreased" use of mental health services (CARE International May 2020, 13). The UN CESCRC reports that due to a lack of medical supplies, infrastructure and medical personnel, particularly in rural areas and in the Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions, the accessibility and availability of high-quality physical and mental health care [UN English version] "remain limited" (UN 25 Mar. 2019, para. 55).

5.2 Implications of the "Anglophone Crisis"

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the RuWCED:

Since 2016, the Anglophone Crisis [11] has "affected" government activities to assist survivors of domestic violence. After some government offices were burnt down, support services were centralized in urban areas of the Northwest Region. The centralization of government support services "makes it costly" for survivors in rural areas to travel to the offices for help. Furthermore, "[a]t some point," people in the community "were not allowed to go to government offices to seek protection." NGOs, such as RuWCED and PLAN International, provide support to survivors based on their needs, including health, financial and psychological services. However, the current situation of the security crisis has meant that "most" organizations are now just doing "spontaneous" activities since most communities "are not very safe," thereby limiting survivors' access to assistance (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

According to the OCHA, the armed conflict in the Far North has "exacerbated preexisting gaps" in access to justice and services, including social services, and in service provision by the local authorities (UN Mar. 2021, 68). The same source adds that "negative" coping mechanisms arising from preexisting socio-cultural norms that "discriminat[e]" against women and girls, such as early marriage, survival sex and exploitation, have been adopted by households and individuals in "many rural areas" affected by the conflict, including in the Far North Region (UN Mar. 2021, 68). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5.3 Impact of COVID19

According to CARE International, in April 2020, Cameroon was among the West African countries [CARE International English version] "most strongly impacted" by the pandemic (CARE International May 2020, 12). According to sources, the government's response to the COVID19 pandemic has been undermined by allegations of [Amnesty International English version] "mismanagement of ... funds" (Amnesty International 29 Mar. 2022, 149) or [HRW English version] "corruption and misappropriation of funds," as well as a lack of "transparency" (HRW 13 Jan. 2022).

Regarding access to support services for survivors, the RuWCED indicated that the COVID19 pandemic made things "even more complex," particularly for those without a telephone, mobile device or Internet connection; in "some cases," services could only be accessed by telephone or hotline

(RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022). In its analysis of nine West African countries, CARE International reports that since the start of the pandemic, the use of health care services for illnesses other than COVID19 has [CARE International English version] "considerably decreased," "especially" in urban centres (CARE International May 2020, 5, 11). The RuWCED reported that transportation to State-sponsored service centres has become "very expensive" due to the pandemic, and that even in the cities where these services are located, officials report that resources have been "largely diverted" to COVID19 prevention measures and that "their budgets are far less now" (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

According to the testimony of a health worker in Cameroon interviewed as part of the CARE International report, since the beginning of the pandemic, [CARE International English version] "[t]here is violence in the household," because when "men stay at home they are more demanding of women and children," and although there are women who come to the hospital, "others are hiding" (CARE International May 2020, 18). The RuWCED reported that in the Northwest region, the stay-at-home measures introduced in connection to the COVID19 pandemic were accompanied by "increased" cases of domestic violence (RuWCED 25 Apr. 2022).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] ICF is an international organization that provides advice and digital services to business and government clients, including coordinating the world's "largest" global health survey (ICF n.d.).

[2] The survey was conducted in collaboration with the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and two government entities in Cameroon, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) and the Central Bureau for Census and Population Studies (BUCREP) (MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 4). The information was collected through an online questionnaire made available on [translation] "professional platforms and social media" covering respondents' demographic information, as well as information related to the COVID19 pandemic and the household effects of the implementation of health measures,

including on spousal and family violence (MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 5). In total, there were 2,024 participants, 52.4 percent male and 47.6 percent female; 60 percent of respondents were in union (MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 5, 6).

[3] According to the report, economic violence is the [translation] "refusal to give money to the spouse, confiscation of the spouse's money, control of the spouse's spending, refusal to give money for food, etc." (MINPROFF and BUCREP of Cameroon and UN Women [2020], 21).

[4] The 2018 demographic survey notes that [translation] "as security conditions did not permit all areas of the Southwest Region to be covered, data presented for this region is not representative of the entire region but primarily reflects the situation in urban areas" (NIS of Cameroon and ICF Feb. 2020, 414, 415).

[5] The Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) is an initiative of the InterAgency Standing Committee (IASC) of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (UN n.d.).

[6] The Rural Women Center for Education and Development Cameroon (RuWCED) is an NGO based in Ndop in Cameroon's Northwest Region (RuWCED n.d.b.) that works to raise awareness of the rights of women and children in rural areas and their access to education and financial resources (RuWCED n.d.b.).

[7] For information on the situation of single women, see Response to Information Request CMR201034 of June 2022.

[8] Fighting Domestic Violence, a comparative law tool, was developed by Baker McKenzie with the financial support of Global Rights for Women and Every Woman Treaty and allows for rapid analysis of various countries' national legislation (Baker McKenzie 1 Dec. 2021).

[9] Charles Manga Fombad is a professor of law and the Head of the Comparative African Constitutional Law Unit at the University of Pretoria in South Africa (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015). The article was published on the website of the Hauser Global Law School Program at New York University (Fombad Nov./Dec. 2015).

[10] According to the US CIA *World Factbook*, the unification of the English and Frenchspeaking regions into a single state took place in 1972 (US 14 Apr. 2022).

[11] In the Englishspeaking regions (Northwest and Southwest), the "Anglophone conflict," an armed conflict between armed separatist groups and security forces, has persisted since 2016, following peaceful protests calling for an end to the marginalization of Anglophones in the country, to which the government responded with "lethal force" (Al Jazeera 29 Apr. 2021). Several armed groups were subsequently formed in response to the "widespread violence" (NRC 4 June 2019).

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