

**COMMERCIAL SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN  
IN CAMEROON**

Association Enfants, Jeunes et Avenir  
(ASSEJA)

A report compiled  
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEMO	Action of Education in Open Milieu
ASSEJA	Association for Children, Youths and the future
ILO	International Labour Office
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Childs
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
DEI	International Defence for Children
DIAL	Investment Development on Long Term Adjustment
DSCN	Direction of Statistics and National Accountability
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
METPS	Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Insurance
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINCOF	Ministry of Women Affairs
MINEDUC	Ministry of National Education
MINJES	Ministry of Youths and Sports
MINVILLE	Ministry of Urban Affairs
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Support Fund

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## SUMMARY

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) has become a major concern around the world. Although many are still not aware of its effects, it is gaining grounds in African society. As a result, the State and international organs are very much concerned with such an act. Despite numerous studies conducted so far, it still remains difficult to establish exact statistics based on the global view of CSEC. Sexual exploitation of children exists in different forms such as child prostitution, pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

CSEC is provoked by misery and poverty in most families, the limits of public politics on matters such as school attendance and education, the insufficiency of the State to effectively guarantee all the rights prescribed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989<sup>1</sup> and those of the ILO Convention N° 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour adopted on 28 June 1930; Convention N° 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment adopted on the 26 June 1973 and Convention N° 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour adopted on 17 June 1999 and ratified by Cameroon in 2000; and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which entered into force in November 1999.<sup>2</sup>

To resolve such issues as the definition of a child, the root causes of and forms of CSEC in Cameroon, the profile of child sex exploiters and what can be done to eliminate CSEC, ECPAT, in collaboration with ASSEJA, launched a research on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in three towns in Cameroon: Yaoundé, Bamenda and Bertoua.

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<sup>1</sup> Marie-Thérèse MENGUE et Jean Didier BOUKONGOU, Comprendre la pauvreté au Cameroun, PUCAC, Yaoundé, 2004, 386 pages.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding what concerns child labour, it is referred to in articles 15 and 16, which talk about protection against abuse and poor treatment.

## **1. Objectives of the Study**

An analysis of the situation of CSEC in Cameroon should provide:

- A background description of the phenomenon of CSEC describing the underlying causes presented through a narrative description with any complementary tables that may help illustrate “push” and “pull” factors that force children into CSEC in Cameroon;
- An overview of the forms of child prostitution in Cameroon;
- An overview of the types of sexually exploited children and children that are at risk to be sexually exploited, e.g. street children, children in residential care institutions, child workers, etc.;
- An overview of the types of exploiters: both internal (Cameroon) and external (international, e.g. foreigners and tourists);
- Data on trends, nature and pattern of CSEC;
- Concrete proposals on how to eradicate CSEC in the country;
- Information on how the country is responding to the phenomenon of CSEC;
- Analysis on tools that seem to be most effective in combating CSEC; good-practice examples; and
- Information on institutional and non-governmental actors involved in addressing the problem (or any of its forms).

## **2. Interests of the Study**

This study has a double interest: scientific and practical. Scientific because the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cameroon is a recent concern that needs to be further explored. The social status of the child is progressively degrading with respect to traditional landmarks. A child is removed from his/her familiar structures and exposed to a world where he/she is considered an object for sexual activity, sale and labour. It is imperative for commercial sexual exploitation of children to be explained so that it can be better dealt with. Social interest is also necessary for the sustainable development of children and society at large.

## **3. Methodology**

The basis of this study was a questionnaire proposed by ECPAT in relation to children, parents, exploiters and resource persons. For more qualitative data to be obtained, the researchers met with children who agreed to discuss the standards of their lives and the difficulties they encounter on a daily basis. Interviews were also held with the parents and resource persons (administration and NGO).

The field study was conducted in Yaoundé, Bamenda and Bertoua between May and June 2004 and completed with a desk study in 2005. 25 children were interviewed in Bamenda, 25 in Yaoundé and 11 in Bertoua, totalling 62. Overall, 161 people were contacted (62 children, 47 parents, 21 exploiters and 31 resource persons). Difficulties encountered during the data collection process explain why the study was more qualitative than quantitative.

## **4. Results Obtained**

Pertinent data was collected; the result shows that

- a) the age of the children varied between 16 and 18 years old;
- b) the sex distribution reveals that a majority of the children questioned were male: 49 boys against 13 girls; (During data collection for this research, the following category of children were contacted and interviewed: truck pushers, washers, child street vendors, domestic servants, victims of CSEC and school pupils. As it was difficult to contact confirmed child victims of CSEC in Cameroon, only seven children (girls) who definitely belonged to this category were interviewed for the research. The difficulty was due in part to the fact that it is taboo to discuss sex in public in the country let alone accepting that children could be engaged in it. In Cameroon, children involved in the above-mentioned work are susceptible to commercial sexual exploitation. There is also unconfirmed information that school children are sexually exploited by school authorities for favours such as higher grades and protection from punishment. The number of boys indicated in the report shows that researchers found it easier to reach and interview more boys involved in, or at risk of CSEC than girls. However, this does not mean that there are more boys than girls who are victims or at risk of CSEC in Cameroon).
- c) the children reflect all the provinces of Cameroon, as well as 6 from outside the country; and
- d) full-time attendance in schools in Cameroon has decreased considerably, which explains why a majority of the children have only reached the primary level.

Activities carried out by children vary in magnitude; girls become involved in prostitution for financial reasons; children who are domestic servants are sometimes abused by their employers; street children or abandoned orphans get their daily bread by selling stolen articles; they wash vehicles, carry or push heavy loads in the railway stations, and so on.

The study also reveals that laws relating to CSEC in Cameroon are too complex and therefore difficult to apply. Attempts to enforce certain laws relating to CSEC have been limited by corruption and poverty and the fact that most poor families do not consider CSEC as a crime and therefore are not willing to cooperate with the judiciary to prosecute child sex offenders. In spite of these difficulties, governmental structures and those of the civil society are conscious of the dangers of CSEC, and efforts are being made to eliminate it, but this is hampered by financial and human resource constraints.

Causes of commercial sexual exploitation of children might include natural disasters, economic crises, poverty of the family, failure to educate the child and ignorance of the family. Because of the dangers inherent in CSEC, there is a need to help parents identify and use alternative labour-force instead of using innocent and malleable children. There is also a need to educate parents on the rights of the child. The consequences of CSEC are harmful to children as they undergo physical violence, extreme psychological trauma and risks including HIV/AIDS. As a victim of commercial sexual exploitation, the



child also becomes an object for sexual activity, sale and labour at an age where he/she should be educated and protected.

## **5. Difficulties Encountered and Limitations**

A number of loopholes made the data collection exercise difficult on the field. Materials and time granted were not adequate enough to explore such a delicate topic. Three weeks or a month would have been more sufficient to collect information of greater credibility; there were also language barriers. In most cases the children and parents targeted to provide the information had low levels of literacy or were not fluent in French, thus making progress difficult. However, the data collected on the issue show that CSEC is a hidden truth in Cameroon.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The question of commercial sexual exploitation of children should be associated with the vast programme of poverty eradication. This question is linked to insufficient family consideration by the State. The aim of this study was not only to highlight CSEC, but also to draw attention to the non-respected conventions for reasons due to lack of political will. It also illustrated the ever-increasing poverty margin in Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), including Cameroon; these insufficiencies deserve a global social reform. In addition to all these, the following recommendations were retained:

- Impose exact knowledge and data collection in order to accurately gauge the scope of CSEC;
- Organise an international symposium to closely examine CSEC;
- Sensitise the population on the dangers of commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- Implicate the State in the diffusion, know-how and application of the norms in force on child protection;
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- Draft and enact laws on the commercial sexual exploitation of children to comply with the standards set out in international legal instruments;
- Impose sanctions on exploiters who endanger the lives of children;
- Acquire financial support from international organs in the fight, which will enable the State and civil society to find solutions to eradicate CSEC.
- Mobilise families, an indispensable element in the fight against sexual exploitation of children; and
- Consider local realities and the poverty situation of families in the strategic plans to fight against CSEC.

## INTRODUCTION

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a reality in the world today. In Africa, and particularly in Cameroon, there are children who are completely disconnected from the international documents that protect them. They have different life cycles from those with a physical and psychological development itinerary, which can destabilise them. Knowledge of this will enable the understanding that CSEC in Cameroon is dynamically linked to its economic and social problems.

### 1. A Brief Presentation of Cameroon

Cameroon is surrounded by the Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad and the Congo Basin, and has a surface area of 475,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its bordering countries are Nigeria, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo and Central African Republic. It is characterised by a variety of climates and vegetation. Cameroon is divided into 10 administrative provinces: Centre (Yaoundé), Littoral (Douala), West (Bafoussam), South West (Buea), North West (Bamenda), Adamawa (Ngaoundere), North (Garoua), Far North (Maroua), South (Ebolowa) and East (Bertoua). There are over 240 ethnic groups in Cameroon, with an estimated population of 15 million people, unevenly distributed throughout the national territory. In the southeast there are 10 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, with a peak of 200 inhabitants in the western provinces. 42% of the population is under the age of 14 and 72% are under 30. This is however, an economic advantage as well as a pressure to both the social services and the labour market. 50% of the population live in urban areas, with about half of them residing in cities such as Douala (over two million inhabitants) and Yaoundé (over a million inhabitants).

After a long period of one-party systems, multi-parties were introduced in the early 1990s, with free and fair elections. This, however, came with social instabilities and acts of violence in major cities such as Douala. The constitutional reforms of 18 January 1996 saw the organisation of political powers, with the election of the President of the Republic with a direct universal suffrage for a period of seven years renewable. President Paul Biya, in power since 1982, was re-elected in 1997. His party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has a vast majority in parliament, with 116 seats out of 180.

Like other democratic States, Cameroon guarantees fundamental freedoms in its constitution and has ratified many international engagements in human rights matters. Cameroon is an active member in both regional and internal politics. Its engagement with the Commonwealth in 1995, the hosting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in 1996, its participation in several meetings related to regional integration and peace in Central Africa, the presence of many international institutions in its capital, Yaoundé, and the hosting of the France-Afrique Summit in 2001, makes Cameroon an island of peace and stability in Africa.

After a period of growth from 1965 to 1985, the economic situation, which began to degrade in 1988, was accentuated in 1994 with the devaluation of

the CFA Franc. Due to increasing agricultural disciplines and the collaboration of economic competitors in some sectors, there has been a growth rate of 5% per year. Since 1997, the country has continued to make greater adjustment efforts as well as ambitious reforms to favourably reverse the growth to fight poverty.

The perspectives for the future are positive due to the eligibility of Cameroon to the HIPC initiative. This will enable Cameroon to increase its network of poverty reduction, which is affecting over 50% of the population. Cameroon's poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) confirms this reality and shows that "poverty in Cameroon varies considerably according to the regions. In urban zones, the rate is 22%, which doubles in rural zones at a rate of 50%."

The crisis situation mainly affects families, thus causing the children to become involved in the informal sector. It also shows the interest of the international communities through agencies such as UNICEF, which is very much engaged in the situation of children in Cameroon, with the aim of assuming the real application of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989. For these reasons, ECPAT, through ASSEJA, began an investigation on CSEC in three towns in Cameroon (Yaoundé, Bamenda and Bertua).

#### **a. From a theoretical perspective**

For the last ten years, the situation of children has undergone parallel mutations to the detriment of the economic situation of Cameroon, and consequently, urban families. If the phenomenon of street children calls for the attention of political authorities and international institutions, then it has realised that child labour and CSEC were barely touched upon. This was noted to be at the origin of political and social initiatives pivoted to targeted groups, especially children. It is not the case with the economic growth effects regarding living conditions. Moreover, the issue of CSEC in Cameroon still remains to be explored. The social status of a child is progressively degrading with respect to traditional limits. It is thus evident that scientific interest be put in place to better fight CSEC. Scientific data should help the intervening parties on the field.

#### **b. From a practical perspective**

With this study, actions to promote and protect the rights of a child in Cameroon will contribute to reducing the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation. The targeted objective is to put in place an effective strategy to fight CSEC. The social interest is evident and pressing for the sustainable development of children all over the country.

#### **c. Working plan**

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter outlines the theory and methodology of the study. The second chapter presents an analysis of the data collected on the field. The third chapter provides proposals for sustained

actions. And the last chapter presents an overview to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cameroon.

## CHAPTER 1: AN OUTLINE OF THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

### I. THEORETICAL OUTLINE

#### A. DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

In 1996, the ECPAT movement, in collaboration with UNICEF and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child organized the First World Congress against CSEC in Stockholm, Sweden. At the Congress, 122 countries adopted the **Stockholm Agenda for Action**, which calls for States, all sectors of society, and national, regional and international organizations to take action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). In particular, it calls on countries to develop National Plans of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and to implement the Agenda for Action in six areas: coordination, cooperation, prevention, protection, recovery and reintegration, and child participation. The National Plans of Action provide governmental and child care agencies an opportunity to cooperate in devising strategies through national policy to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children and promote children's rights in their countries.

In December 2001, the Second World Congress was hosted by the Government of Japan in Yokohama. One hundred and fifty-nine countries reaffirmed their commitment to the Agenda for Action by adopting the outcome document, the **Yokohama Global Commitment**. Further, the Second World Congress participants recognized and welcomed the positive developments that had occurred since the First World Congress in 1996, including better implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and increased mobilization of national governments and the international community to adopt laws, regulations and programmes to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation.

The Subgroup against the Sexual Exploitation of Children, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (January 2005) asserts that:

*The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of human rights and children's rights. The key element is that this violation of children and their rights arises through a commercial transaction of some sort. That is, there is an exchange in which one or more parties gain a benefit – cash, goods or in-kind – from the exploitation for sexual purposes of someone under the age of 18<sup>3</sup>.*

#### 1. Child Pornography

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography defines child pornography as:

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<sup>3</sup> Subgroup Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (January 2005). *Semantics or Substance? Towards a shared understanding of terminology referring to sexual abuse and exploitation of children.* page56

*Any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.*

The Protocol obliges States to make criminal all acts of “producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling or possessing for the above purposes child pornography,” as defined above. The Stockholm Agenda for Action further recommends that States criminalise the mere possession of child pornography, not just possession for the purposes of distribution.

Under these international standards, producing, distributing, and possessing child pornography should be prohibited by criminal laws and carry strong penalties. The definition of child pornography is broad and covers material showing explicit sexual activities involving children, whether real or simulated, and material displaying the sexual parts of a child intended for primarily sexual purposes. The international standard includes printed material, videotape, audiotape, or digital material stored on a computer.

Child pornography is a prosperous and lucrative industry<sup>4</sup>. According to an enquiry made in 1999 in Yaoundé on video store operators and owners, child pornography is rare. However, some anonymous operators affirmed that there exist many tapes featuring girls of about 19-20 years old that have been exported. It is difficult to estimate the number of children involved, but a significant number of children are sexually exploited in this way.

## **2. Prostitution of Children**

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography defines child prostitution as “the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration”<sup>5</sup>. Consistent with the CRC, a child is defined as a person below 18 years of age. This definition includes any sexual activity with a child, including sexual intercourse, oral or anal penetration, and other forms of sexual touching. The exchange of benefits may be in cash or kind and can be given to the child or to another person or persons on behalf of the child.

The Optional Protocol obliges State Parties to include in criminal law all acts of obtaining, procuring or providing a child for prostitution<sup>6</sup>. This includes full protection from exploitation in child prostitution for all boy and girl children up to 18 years of age. The consent of the child to the sexual activity is irrelevant for the determination of criminal liability.

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<sup>4</sup> Poulin, la violence pornographique. Industrie du fantasme et réalité, Cabédita, Yesus sur Morges.

<sup>5</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, Art. 2 (b).

<sup>6</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, Art. 3, p. 1(b).

It should be noted here that the term ‘prostitution’ can obscure the nature of the behaviour, which can be qualified as sexual abuse, since it evokes deliberate consent and depicts children as criminals instead of victims. Any sexual act with a child undermines the child’s dignity, and prostitution, in this case, is understood as a principal form of sexual exploitation of children.

### **3. Trafficking of Children**

The Trafficking Protocol to the Convention on Transnational Organised Crime is the primary international instrument on trafficking. The Protocol defines trafficking in human beings and contains other provisions on protecting trafficking victims. The Protocol explains trafficking in children as:

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

“Child” shall mean any person less than eighteen years of age.<sup>7</sup>

This Protocol obliges State Parties to establish criminal responsibility under national law for the acts included in the definition<sup>8</sup>.

The Protocol definition differentiates between adults and children in one important aspect: the requirement that illicit means, such as coercion or deception, used for an act to constitute “trafficking in persons” does not apply to trafficking in children. Under the Protocol, if a child is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, this constitutes trafficking even where no illicit means are used to obtain the child’s consent. Thus, for children, the only element required for criminal liability is that a child is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation. This definition reflects the fundamental principle that a child’s consent to exploitation is irrelevant.

## **B. THE SITUATION OF CSEC IN CAMEROON**

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<sup>7</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Art. 3

<sup>8</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Art. 5, p. 1.

Manifestations of CSEC, such as child prostitution and child pornography can be found all over the world. These phenomena are defined by the United Nations as “modern forms of slavery which are incompatible with human rights, human values and dignities and which accompany the well being of individuals, families and the society at large.”<sup>9</sup> The responsibility of the State is often focused on areas where this lucrative activity is developed and is mostly organised by criminals. The fight against CSEC remains a complex issue in spite of the State’s efforts because it touches many cultural, social, economic and religious boundaries. One can note forced marriage, child labour, the domestication of children, child soldiers, and the rural migration that takes children to cities in search of jobs. It should be noted that during armed conflicts, millions of children are abandoned and sexually exploited by soldiers and others. Children are also being sold by their parents to procurers who live on immoral earnings. These actors find it advantageous to trade on child prostitution, claiming that the act is easily exploited. One of these actors also underlined that the trade of virgins is very lucrative, with the notion that having sexual relations with a virgin will eliminate the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. This practice exposes children to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and transmitting it to others.

However, in Cameroon there is very little researched information on the issue of CSEC. Some of the research that took place has not been validated or published. That makes the restitution on the field difficult.

From a judicial perspective, CSEC is dealt with in Cameroon at national, international and regional instruments when it comes to protection.

The following conventions can be stated: 1) the Convention on the Rights of the Child; 2) the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; 3) the Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. 4) Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment; 5) Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; and 6) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACC).

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child**<sup>10</sup> (CRC) was ratified in November 1989 and came into force in September 1990. Currently, there are 192 States that are party to the CRC. Every UN member state has signed and ratified the document with the exception of Somalia and the United States. The CRC is the first binding international instrument setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children.

The Convention defines a child as any person up to 18 years of age and recognizes that children have an inherent right to life and survival, to an identity, to a nationality, to be heard, to freedom of thought, conscience and

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<sup>9</sup> Programme of Action of the UN Commission on Human Rights for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. United Nations, Geneva, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> G.A. res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989). Entered into force 2 September 1990.



religion, to health, and to an education. In the context of commercial sexual exploitation, Articles 34 and 35 of the CRC directly obligate States to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation including child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking.

The **Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography**<sup>11</sup> (OP-SC) is the first of two Optional Protocols to the CRC to enter into force. It entered into force in January 2002 and there are currently 104 States that are party to the Protocol. The Protocol expressly prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and it is the first international instrument to define these terms<sup>12</sup>. Accordingly, the Protocol requires these offences to be treated as criminal acts<sup>13</sup>. The Protocol requires States parties to: Establish grounds for criminalizing these prohibited acts; ensure jurisdiction over the offences; provide for the extradition of offenders; encourage international cooperation between States to pursue offenders; and provide support to child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation.

The **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol)**<sup>14</sup> is a supplementary Protocol added in 2001 to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Protocol was opened for signature in December 2000. There are currently 97 States parties to this Protocol, which grew out of the urgent need to combat transnational crime as tabled by the UN Centre for International Crime Prevention, the UN agency responsible for crime prevention, criminal justice and criminal law reform. The Trafficking Protocol provides the first international definition for trafficking and outlines a comprehensive law enforcement regime<sup>15</sup>. The Protocol establishes a system to criminalise traffickers and protect and assist trafficked persons, thereby strengthening preventive trafficking measures for all persons, particularly the most targeted victims – children and women.

The **International Convention 138 Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973)(ILO Convention 138)** provides that signatories to the Convention pursue a national policy raising the minimum age of employment “consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons”, thereby abolishing “child labour”<sup>16</sup>. The two guiding principles of the Convention are that: (1) the minimum age not be less than 15 years for completing compulsory schooling; and (2) the highest minimum age set for hazardous work not be lower than 18 years. The Convention is a flexible and dynamic instrument setting various minimum ages depending on the type of work. For example, in some cases of countries with an insufficiently developed economy and education facilities, the

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<sup>11</sup> G.A. Res. 54/263, Annex II, 54 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 6, U.N. Doc. A/54/49, Vol. III (2000). Entered into force 18 January 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Article 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Article 3.

<sup>14</sup> G.A. res. 55/25, annex II, 55 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 60, U.N. Doc. A/45/49 (Vol. I) (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Articles 3 and Part III.

<sup>16</sup> C138 Minimum Age Convention, 1973. Article 1.

minimum age for work can be less than 15 years. The Convention is relevant to a discussion on commercial sexual exploitation of children as it complements ILO Convention No. 182 by placing the onus on State Parties to ensure that persons below 18 years of age are never involved in hazardous “work” for remuneration.

The **International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 (ILO Convention 182)**<sup>17</sup> became the first ILO convention to be unanimously adopted by the 174 member states of the ILO in June 1999. The Convention defines the worst forms of child labour as including all forms of slavery, trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography, use of children for illicit activities (such as for the production and trafficking of drugs), and use of children for any work that by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children<sup>18</sup>. The Convention represents the international community’s effort to legally define those types of labour in which children below 18 years of age should not be involved.

The **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACC)** was adopted by the OAU in 1990. The ACC is the first African regional treaty on children’s rights. In many respects, the provisions of the ACC are modelled on the provisions of the CRC. The ACC calls for protection against abuse and bad treatment, negative social and cultural practices, all forms of exploitation or sexual abuse, including involvement of children in prostitution and pornography. It also aims to prevent the sale and trafficking of children, kidnapping, and begging of children.

**RATIFICATION STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS BY CAMEROON<sup>19</sup>**

<b>CRC</b>	<b>1993</b>
<b>OP-SC</b>	<b>Signed in 2001 but not ratified</b>
<b>Trafficking Protocol</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>ILO Convention No. 29</b>	<b>1960</b>
<b>ILO Convention No. 138</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>ILO Convention No. 182</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>ACC</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Stockholm Agenda for Action</b>	<b>2001</b>

At the national level, the Penal Code protects underage children from immoral practices or from cultivating such habits. The notion of sexual exploitation of children for economic purposes and related activities are punishable by the Penal Code. The suppression of those habits is outlined under the umbrella of measures aiming to avoid any public disorder. These deeds are notably suppressed once the victim is underage because the victim does not have a choice.

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<sup>17</sup> Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention 182), 38 I.L.M. 1207 (1999). Entered into force 19 November 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Article 3.

<sup>19</sup> As of March 15, 2006.

The Penal Code suppresses the corruption of youths as underage victims in most cases are abused. At the national level, the Penal Code protects children from what it considers immoral practices or indecent acts. The notion of commercial sexual exploitation of children and related activities encompass a number of acts which are punishable under the Penal Code. The punishment of immoral practices falls within the wider framework of eliminating perverse acts that are considered likely to cause or disturb public order. Such acts are subject to harsher penalties when the victim is a minor, as it is assumed that such children are not able to assume the consequences of a liberated lifestyle. In most cases, minor children are in fact victims of abuse.

This is why the Penal Code represses the «corruption of youth» (meaning to excite, favour or facilitate the debauchery or corruption of a minor (art. 344 of the Penal Code)); moral danger (where a guardian of a child under the age of 18 would allow such a child to reside in a home or establishment where prostitution is practised, or to work in such a place, or to work at a prostitute's house, (art. 345 of the Penal Code)); indecent assault (art. 346 and 3476); procuring (meaning to provoke, aid or facilitate the prostitution of another or to share, even casually, the proceeds of the prostitution of another or to receive proceeds from a person engaging in prostitution: article 294 of the Penal Code), forced marriage (article 356) ; and homosexuality.

Based on the information above, the Penal Code provisions of Cameroon do not appear to comply with the international standards on child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes. The provisions of the Penal Code do not specifically prohibit the purchase of sexual services from children. Furthermore, the Penal Code does not contain any specific provision on child trafficking or child pornography, and as such fails to adequately protect children from CSEC. The failure of Cameroon to ratify the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography should be pointed out as a gap in the protection of children from CSEC.

## C. THE RESPONSE OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The Government of Cameroon has put the fight against poverty at the forefront of their agendas. This is apparent in the actions of some of the ministries that wish to protect children from external dangers. Although there is no clear action plan to fight against sexual exploitation of children for economic purposes, each ministry is prepared to do so. The following are the action plans of some ministries, government and non-governmental organisations directly concerned with the fight against CSEC.

### **1. Government Organisations**

#### **a) Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS)**

The Ministry of Social Affairs focuses on the protection and well being of the family and the child, and is responsible for implementing the Convention on

the Rights of the Child ratified by Cameroon in 1993. Actions concerning CSEC include, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Tourism, an exploratory study on sex tourism involving children in Cameroon; preparations for a national plan of action for the fight against child labour, elaborated in 1997 in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Insurance. Revision of this project has permitted the laying of emphasis on the notion of child trafficking for economic purposes. The objective of this integration is to develop a unique national plan of action covering both issues: child labour and child trafficking. Despite difficulties faced by the Ministry to effectively prevent, protect, recover, reintegrate, train and educate the child victims of CSEC, the issue ranges among its top priorities.

#### **b) Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Insurance (METPS)**

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Insurance is responsible for implementing and coordinating actions in favour of employment, the status of workers, professional relations and social insurance. The Ministry also coordinates the action plan against child labour in collaboration with ILO/IPEC. The priority zones include sensitisation of the populations, judicial protection, the recovery and rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking, the reinforcement of trans-border control and of international cooperation, as well as coordination of any follow-up actions.

#### **c) Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE)**

The Ministry of Justice elaborates and updates legal documents. Regarding sexual exploitation of children, its role is to stress the importance of national and international instruments to fight against CSEC.<sup>20</sup>

#### **d) Ministry of Women's Affairs (MINCOF)**

The Ministry of Women's Affairs<sup>21</sup>, under the framework of its action programmes, scheduled a study of the exploitation of the young girl in the family and society for 2000-2001; its strategies were elaborated in 2000 with an emphasis on "fighting poverty, financing micro-projects of women and young girls, educating the young girl, and creating communal structures, such as Women's Promotion Centres and AIDS Prevention for Girls at Risk". MINCOF, however, does not have a specific programme to fight CSEC, but indirectly contributes to the education of the girl child and setting up micro-projects. The authorities of MINCOF are especially conscious of the causes of exploitation of young girls. They aim to reinforce capacity building in order to put in place a sustainable plan of action to effectively fight the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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<sup>20</sup> A legal publication on the situation of the child elaborated by MINJUSTICE, 2003, is in the process of being finalised

<sup>21</sup> MINCOF is charged with the elaboration and putting in place the measures relative to the respect of the rights of the Cameroonian woman. Thus the eventual disappearance of all sorts of discrimination of women and increase equality in the political economic social and cultural domains.

#### **e) Ministry of Urban Affairs (MINVILLE)**

The Ministry of Urban Affairs has, as its mission, to eliminate incidents caused by rapid urban development. Poverty reduction in urban settings is one of its main areas of work, and is essentially on the socio-professional integration of youth in difficult situations and the prevention of the social issues whose victims are youth and women. The Ministry put in place an action plan in collaboration with UNDP aiming particularly at handling domestic violence, delinquency, and the restructuring of precarious quarters. CSEC is indirectly tackled.

#### **f) Ministry of Tourism (MINTOUR)**

Cameroon adopted its national law on tourism in 1998 (Law no. 98-6 of 14th April 1998) and as member of the World Tourism Organization ratified the international code of tourism in 1999, a deontological code that prohibits child sex tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF, elaborated a project under the theme “Is sexual tourism practised in Cameroon? An analysis of emerging phenomena on contemporary tourism.” The project aims to measure the level of CSEC in Cameroon and to set up an efficient action plan to fight against it. Such a project is anticipative because it aims to prevent a social disaster. Other ministries plan to have an inter-ministerial collaboration that will effectively permit them to combat these social plagues, which potentially hinder normal child development.

## **2. International Organisations**

There are a considerable number of international organisations in Cameroon that support actions favouring the fight against issues that affect the normal growth of a child. Some of these are UNICEF and ILO, which are particularly concerned with CSEC in both labour and sexual domains. A new programme of cooperation for the period 2003-2007, between the Government of Cameroon and UNICEF, was introduced to reinforce the legal and institutional framework for the promotion, defence and realisation of the rights of children in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to ensure the support of measures and mechanisms surrounding vulnerable groups in order to facilitate social insertion. In this context, four categories of vulnerable children were identified: street children, labouring children, children infected with HIV/AIDS, and children in conflict with the law and the implication of children in the informal sector of Cameroon and child trafficking.

ILO initiated a number of studies and actions in favour of exploited children. Among them is the IPEC programme, which ensures respect of Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; an analysis of the situation of children in socio-economic succession; and technical support to government and non-governmental structures under the framework of exploitation of children for economic purposes. In addition, ILO introduced studies on child trafficking for which Cameroon was chosen as a potential partner in the sub-region. A programme to fight against child labour with some key ministries is

in the process of being finalised. In 2001, ILO launched a regional programme aimed at fighting child labour and trafficking entitled “Fighting child trafficking for the purposes of exploitation of their work in Western and Central Africa.” The project involved nine West and Central African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo.

Some local NGOs also work on varied programmes; some of their activities are on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child; education of children, particularly young girls; and bringing up street children, orphans (including AIDS orphans), and children infected with HIV/AIDS. All these activities contribute in the fight against CSEC. However, many people are sceptical about the effectiveness of the fight against CSEC in the context of poverty; they recommend that the school, training and the amelioration of the living conditions of parents should be the only remedy to fight this phenomenon.<sup>22</sup>

All this information points to the existence of CSEC in Cameroon, but solutions to eliminate it are as yet unknown. The intention is there but the programme remains very superficial. This superficiality is explained by a lack of data on CSEC and other information, lack of financial, material and human resources, not forgetting difficulties in the application of laws and conventions elaborated for the fight against CSEC. At this stage of the research, it is difficult to affirm that one now has a good knowledge of the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The literature reviewed indicates that CSEC is a threat to the human and economic development of the country.

The issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children needs to be further explored in order to propose a means of sustainable actions to contribute to its elimination. To do this, a number of questions should be addressed:

Who are children?

What are the root causes of this issue?

How are these put into practice?

Who is involved?

What can be done to eliminate this phenomenon?

On the basis of these analyses and questions, one can, as a form of explanation of CSEC, hypothesise, showing that CSEC in general, and for commercial aims, in particular, is an organized social crime in Cameroon. While the issue is exacerbated by the economic crisis, which has been at the chagrin of African countries for the last decade, it is also the result of a perverse deviation of a secular practise in an already destabilised society, caused by structural and functional mutation, and provoked by the passage of a rural society to a modern and industrialised one. All these realities are at the origin of the development of the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children, who are exposed to the worst form of human dignity.

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<sup>22</sup> We did not find it necessary to present the activities of the NGOs because they are not centred on the implication of children in the informal sectors, but the NGO authorities contacted are mentioned in the annex.

## II. METHODOLOGY FRAMEWORK

### A. SITES AND SAMPLES OF CHILDREN QUESTIONED

Three towns were chosen for the study. These choices were justified by the fact that they constitute places that people are drawn to. Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, is considered a cosmopolitan city, propitious to the sexual exploitation of children; Bamenda is a commercial town that welcomes many people from outside its borders; and Bertua is a roundabout town midway between Bangui (the capital of the Central African Republic) and the port of Douala. This town has a large population, vast cultures, and witnesses dense commercial and forestry activities. The table below recapitulates the number of questioned children encountered in each of the towns.

**Table 1: Sites and samples of children**

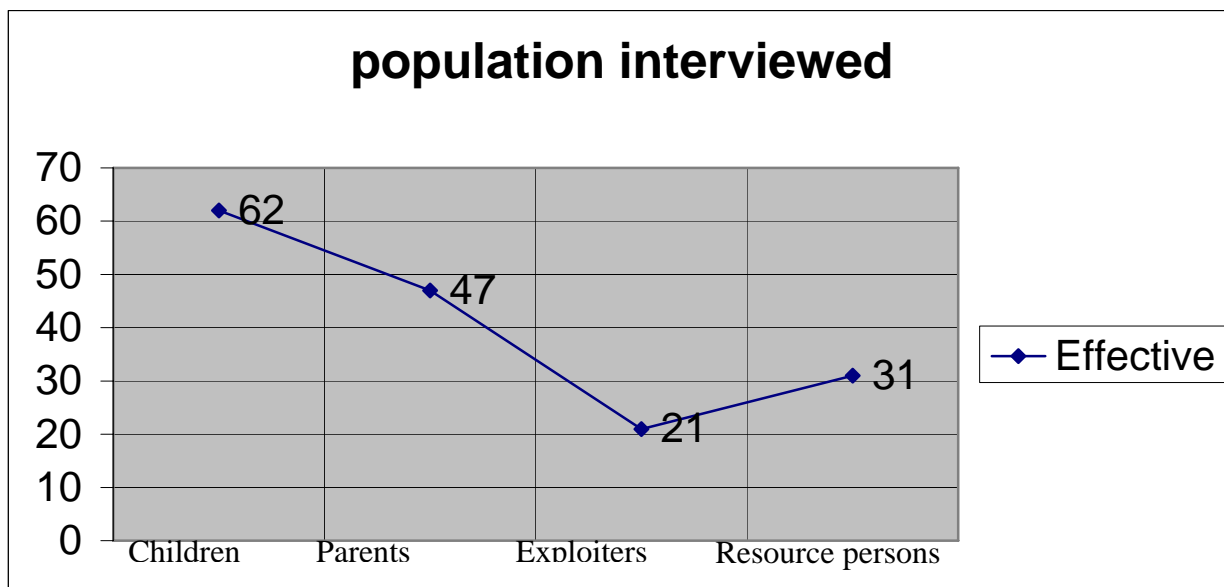
<b>Town/city</b>	<b>Forecast # of respondents</b>	<b>Actual # of respondents</b>
Bamenda	25	26
Bertua	25	11
Yaoundé	50	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>62</b>

On the basis of information and observation prior to data collection from the field, the researcher estimated that more children would respond to the questionnaire, but due to the fact that open discussion on CSEC is a taboo in the country, and the limited time for the investigations, only 62 children were reached and responded to the questionnaire.

### B. POPULATION INTERVIEWED

To get an idea on the range of CSEC, the researchers were interested in the children, parents, public administration personnel and NGO representatives (resource persons). This is the graphical recapitulation.

Graph 1: Distribution according to the population interviewed



Source: Our enquiry May-June 2004.

#### C. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Children implicated in the fight against CSEC were male and female and under the age of 18 years old. At the margin, participants took turns to directly observe places where children were being sexually exploited, thereby taking the researchers to sites where exploitation may take place and be observed. Given certain difficulties, the researchers previewed a sample of 200 children but questioned only 62<sup>23</sup>, divided between the 3 towns. 47 parents, 21 exploiters, and 31 resource persons were also interviewed. In spite of the limited number of children interviewed during this research, coupled with the fact that there are limited statistics on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cameroon, analysis of findings of the research is both quantitative and qualitative.

#### D. RESEARCH TEAM

The research team comprised 5 people: three interviewers, one person in charge of minutes and the analysis of the data and one person who translated the text from French to English.

#### E. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED AND THE LIMIT OF THE STUDY

Firstly, the time imparted and financial means available proved to be most insufficient to cover such a delicate subject. More than three weeks, or one month, was needed to question the children and to collect information that was more substantial. The families that provided information had low levels of literacy or were unable to speak French. An interpreter was used.

<sup>23</sup> They were interviewed informally, without the use of the expected questionnaire.



## CHAPTER II: ENVIRONMENT OF TOWNS QUESTIONED

### A. YAOUNDE

Yaoundé, the headquarters of the Central Province, has a population of 1,237,500, and is the political capital and the seat of many institutions. Yaoundé hosts many local and international organisations and agencies that are in charge of the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, such as ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO. These different structures carry out many actions for the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children<sup>24</sup>.

Going through the town of Yaoundé, it is hard not to notice the NGOs present that focus on the defence of children's rights as well as social centres of rehabilitation that listen to, care for and house child victims of all types of abuse. It is thought that generally, the absence of synergy in the actions of these associations and NGOs is deplored; there is the impression that every structure secretly carries out its small affairs.

Certain associations which believe that the fight against CSEC is not widespread because these associations and NGOs carry out their activities in diverse ranges confirmed this concern. Another observation made during the study was that the NGOs and associations contacted are very aware of the situation - some of them received and housed children who gave them information – but these associations refused, in the name of ‘preservation of the intimacy of the children’, to reveal information and, moreover, all the contacts with children on this subject<sup>25</sup>. This observation is also applicable to public structures that frequently receive cases that could be qualified as commercial sexual exploitation. These structures include social services in charge of police stations, tribunals, appeal courts, and some external or special services of the Ministry of Social Affairs.<sup>26</sup>

Yaoundé, which was reputed as the seat of these institutions and ministries has developed into an important commercial hub. The economic crisis in Cameroon has preferred the installation of poverty, which affects more than half the country's population. On observation, the town of Yaoundé seems to be made up mainly of traders, civil servants, students, teachers, the unemployed, housekeepers, and so on; most people undertake extra economic activities to get additional income that might help subsidize the regular monthly income.

Areas surrounding the ministries have been turned into markets where one fresh food, household items, clothes and other items are sold. The absence of a canteen in ministries has facilitated the development of “touredos”, makeshift restaurants where people converge for a meal and/or a beer during break. Touredos are also found in markets or around railways. In most cases, young boys wash plates for the sellers and they are paid either in cash

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<sup>24</sup> One of the merits of this action is to have permitted Cameroonians to have evolved in their positions. The presence of CSEC is acknowledged even though its impact is not actually felt.

<sup>25</sup> See the lists of the contacted NGOs in the Annex.

<sup>26</sup> Only some groups who take care of street children attended to us and allowed us to have discussions with the children.

or in kind. The salary depends on the number of plates washed. Tournedos have the advantage of offering varied dishes at a less expensive rate, although food served in open air does not guarantee its cleanliness. There are also many small commercial activities and establishments on the streets, such as grocery stores, sale of food stuff, fresh fruits, restaurants, and so on. Children often help their parents in these situations.

There are many inns, nightclubs, taverns and game halls in Yaoundé. According to some resource persons, it is in places such as these that sexual exploitation takes place. An investigation affirmed that the eradication of CSEC is difficult because “it is some of the people with high profiles in this country who are involved in sexually exploiting children; that is why they do not want to recognise the existence of the phenomenon in the country”.

## B. BAMENDA

Bamenda, the headquarters of the Northwest province, has a population of 293,100. It has always been a popular town, considered one of the Anglophone provinces of Cameroon; it harbours a multi-ethnic population, with varied habits and customs, who share a sense of commerce and long commercial journeys; behaviour linked to the proximity of the area. In fact, most of the population of Bamenda is involved in exporting and importing goods to and from Nigeria, a neighbouring country, and children inevitably accompany their elders and parents in their quest for money and riches.

In the centre of Bamenda or its neighbouring villages, children are found mainly in private homes or at markets. In Santa, situated about 5 kilometres from Bamenda, contact was made with the parish council president, who regrouped women of the parish, thereby permitting the researchers to meet their children (including those who had been sexually exploited). A trip to the market was very interesting and allowed for room to obtain more information. It should be noted that the force of social lineage is quite strong and the people voluntarily obey orders from the hierarchy; confidential information is very hard to get. Adults meet with children and tell them not to divulge any information to outsiders they do not trust. It was therefore difficult for the researchers to elicit information from the children, especially in the presence of adults. This was considered compromising. Children can often be seen working or strolling around in the market, train station – which is operational 24 hours a day – in bars, restaurants, and so on, but there is usually an adult supervising them.

The existence of CSEC is not evident in Bamenda, but the fact that many inhabitants were unwilling to talk was taken as a sign that the phenomenon is quite real. Instead they try to preserve their interests, or not be an object of inquiry at all.

## C. BERTUA

Bertua is the headquarters of the Eastern Province, with a population of 156,900. With time it has become a meeting point for many activities. This province is covered by dense forests, exploited by many companies, most of

which are owned by foreigners. Midway between Bangui and the port of Douala, there is a mixed population and culture with dense commercial activity.

### 1. The periphery

There are trucker rest stops at all entrances to the town; one is in Bonis<sup>27</sup>, five kilometres from Bertua, the other in Mandjou, five kilometres southwest<sup>28</sup> of Bertua, and the third (carrefour dernier Poteau) constitutes the last quarter, binding the town. Truck drivers stop at the site of exploitation before continuing toward their destinations. These crossroads, almost identical, are located in areas that are mainly constituted by taverns, where the truckers can rest, see a mechanic or wait for post or change before continuing their journey. At these points of attraction there is human and vehicular traffic 24 hours a day, with most people, young, old, children, civil servants and clerks alike, trying to eke out a living. At the roundabout, there is a health centre, a police station, a church and a mosque, making it a meeting point for most of the town's population.

Mandjou (a Muslim village), has the largest number of inns per square meter, with all levels of comfort. Here, all the children (mostly girls) are very visible, roaming around, selling goods, carrying out household chores or cooking in the inns. When one of the managers of the inns was asked why these girls are always on service at night, he simply said they were working as "room maids", "they accompany clients either to serve their food or to indicate their rooms and the toilets". Mandjou seems like an ordinary village during the day, but changes as night approaches. There are many dark corners and young girls of no more than 15 years old loiter around, heavily made up and clearly waiting for someone. Among them are young mothers, who will not lose a chance of going out on an expedition, their young babies carried on their back. After a short discussion with a man, a girl will leave with him for about 20 minutes, and another girl comes to take her place. This is a recurring situation throughout the night for some. Others go accompanied and do not come back. One barman was questioned on the presence of young girls in his bar, he said, "I don't send people away here unless there are many clients who want to sit. If they sit and do not disturb me, I cannot ask them what they want."

### 2. The Central Town

At the centre of the town is a 24-hour motor park, around which is a town where the municipal market can be found, along with some administrative buildings and video clubs, as well as the red light district, Ndem Nnam.

During the day, Bertua resembles most towns in Africa in search for development, where the inhabitants are putting everything in place to meet their basic needs (food, shelter, health, clothing and education). At the level of the motor park and other places, there are hawkers in commercial activities

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<sup>27</sup> Situated on the outskirts of the town towards Belabo and Abong Mbang.

<sup>28</sup> It is a cross road with one of the highways leading to the Garuoa-Boulaya and Batouri Roads.

in bars, hotels, game halls, etc, and many children as well. In most cases, young girls contribute to the household revenue from childhood.

A visit to Ndem Nnam revealed poorly conjoined housing structures. In certain places were rows of rooms separated by a straight, dark corridor, with a toilet at the end. On the verandas, girls of all ages were cooking, washing plates or clothes. In an abandoned room with an open door, dirt juxtaposed with other items used for the occasion (old heater, sword, empty crates, old shoes, etc.). There was an approximate minimum of three to four persons per room. Unfortunately, the people did not allow the researchers to talk to them let alone enter the premises.

From 9 p.m., the motor park transforms; the empty market stalls sell food being prepared by 3 or 4 young girls seated behind the barbecue, with the youngest being only about 8 years old. They work on a rotational basis; if one of the girls is solicited for another type of service, she disappears behind the wall of the park and comes back later. Young girls are often found in serious discussions with motor taxi drivers. The drivers sometimes take them along and bring them back later, or follow them behind the walls of the park, where some inns are also located.

Down the road from the park, towards the “haoussa” quarter, are two nightclubs, one of which is sealed. In front of and behind another, the same scene as above is observed, the only difference being that the women are more mature. A young boy told the researchers that the other nightclub was shut down because “it was the house of bad things. There was everything there! All you wanted, there was even what you didn’t want (laughs), the old oh! children oh, girls as well as boys. And they sold drugs to people. People even danced naked there (...) the governor decided that it had to be closed.” In certain bars and nightclubs young girls serve drinks, assist their mothers, or sell food.

Conclusively, on exploration of the towns of Yaoundé, Bamenda and Bertua, the commercial sexual exploitation of children exists, but more time is needed for observation and for the collection of more detailed information.

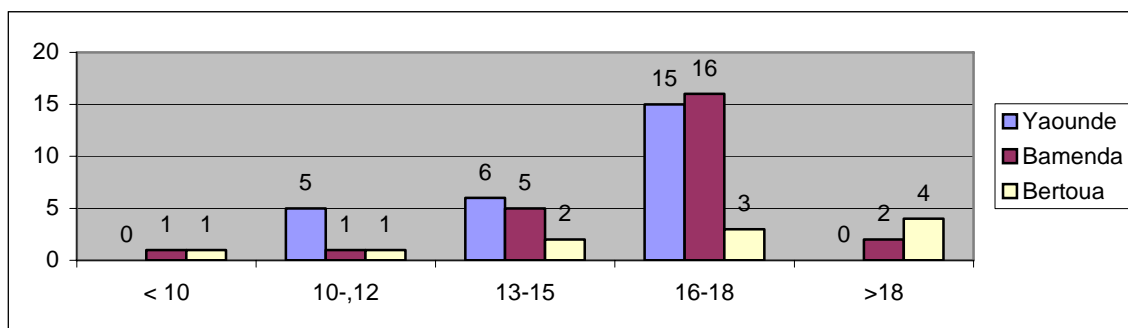
### CHAPTER III: COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

This chapter presents an identification of the actors at risk of being implicated in the commercial sexual exploitation of children. They include children, parents, and exploiters. For each actor the following variables were taken into account: age, sex, level of education, marital status, profession and province of origin.

#### I. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ACTORS

##### A. CHILDREN

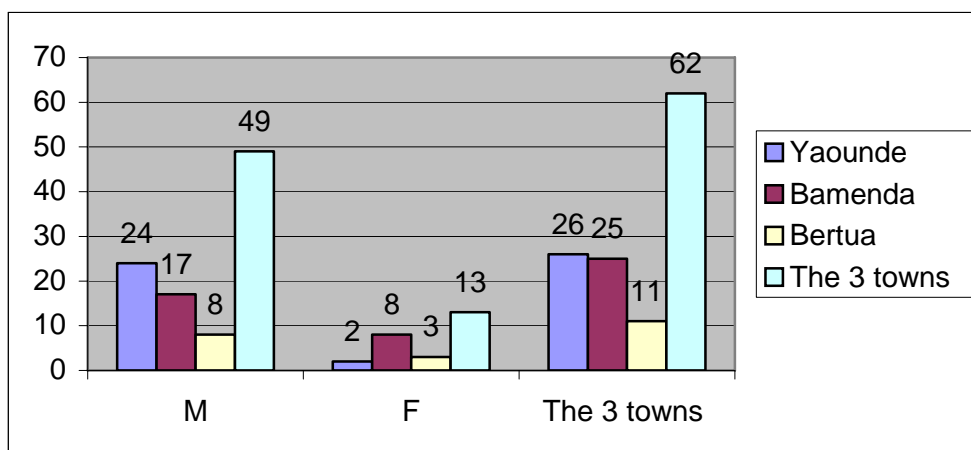
**Graph 2: Distribution of children by age**



The age of the children questioned varied from 10 to 18 years. The most represented age group was between 16 and 18 years old. The age group most at risk of being sexually exploited varies from one town to another. In Yaoundé and Bamenda, the group between the ages of 16-18 are most at risk; while in Bertoua, those over 18 years of age are more vulnerable. Overall, it shows that the age group of 16-18 are most exposed to commercial sexual exploitation.

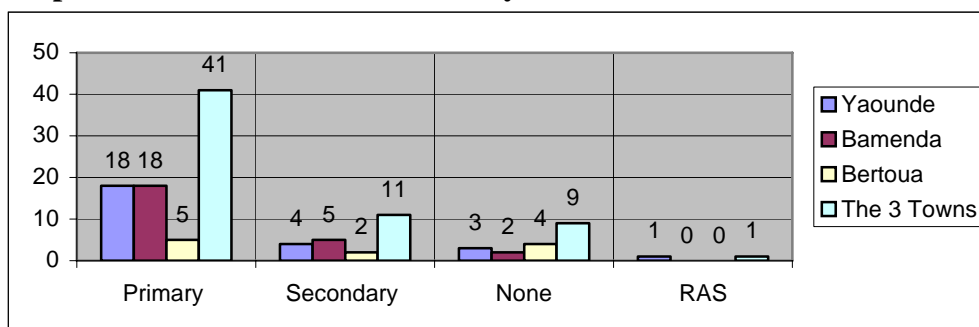
**Graph 3: Distribution of children by sex**

Town	F	M
Yaounde	2	24
Bamenda	8	17
Bertua	3	8
Total	13	49



Among the children interviewed, the graph above reveals that most of the interviews were held with males, with 49 boys and 13 girls. Regarding age and sex, the relative youthfulness of the active population of the different towns questioned is clear.

**Graphic 4: Distribution of children by level of education**



The level of education of these children is very low; 41 of the children only have a primary level education and 9 of them have never been to school; one child out of 62 did not mention anything about the level of studies. This is a frightening reality for a population that has an average age of 14 years.

**Table 5: Representation according to respondents' provinces of origin**

Province of origin	Yaoundé	Bamenda	Bertoua	Total
Centre	9	0		9
East	2	0		6
West	7	5		14
North-West	0	14		14
Littoral	1	1		2
Adamawa	1	0		4
North	4	0		5
Far North	1	0		2
Foreigners	1	5		6
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>62</b>

This table shows that the children interviewed come mainly from the West and Northwest provinces, 28 out of 62 children. The West and Southwest provinces are the most represented, with 14 children from each. The centre province registers 9 children; 6 in the East, 14 in the north zone, 2 in the Littoral areas and 6 from Nigeria, Chad and Central African Republic. The presence of children from other countries is explained by the widespread poverty in those countries, without forgetting the conflicts of war, which are at the origin of a mass migration by the youths of these countries.

### 1. Living Conditions

It should be underlined that the conditions in which some of the children are brought up is fairly common in all regions of the country where of the population exercises income generating activities and they all come from other localities, in most cases, on their own means or accompanied by friends or a family member, to settle in the town in order to make ends meet.

**Table 6: Distribution of children according to their means of living (lodging)**

Housing	Yaoundé	Bamenda	Bertua	Total
In my mother's house	2	3	1	6
At their parents	3	5	2	10
At one of the members of the family	5	6	3	14
At a friend	2	11	2	15
Alone	1	0	2	3
On the street	6	0	1	7
Rehabilitation centre	7	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>62</b>

Of the 62 children interviewed, 15 of them live with friends, 14 live with a family member (brother, sister, aunt, uncle or grandmother), 10 live with their parents and 6 with only their mother. Seven children live by the roadside and 7 others in a rehabilitation centre. Very few of these children know the inherent balance of a complete family. They are mostly called upon to take care of family needs and to contribute to paying rent and other related expenses for the house in which they live. Regarding lodging, one child mentioned:

*I live with my grandmother and at times with my friends. All children live at one another's house at times. If there is no place to sleep, sometimes we sleep on the street.*

For example, the seven children involved in prostitution that the researchers met perform their activities either alone or accompanied by a friend or at

times a child. Without a lucrative occupation, they count on their nocturnal outings to take care of their needs and support them financially.

## 2. Strategy of survival

**Table 7: Distribution of children according to their stated occupations**

Activities	Yaoundé	Bamenda	Bertua	Total
Truck Pusher	7	5	2	14
Washer	5	6	3	14
Retailer	7	3	1	11
Domestic servant	3	6	1	10
Prostitution	0	5	2	7
Pupil	4	0	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>62</b>

Source: Our inquiry May-June 2004.

An examination of activities exercised by these children shows diversity where there are a majority of truck pushers (14) and washers (14) out of a total of 62 children. Eleven children are retailers, 10 domestic servants, 7 involved in prostitution and 6 pupils were registered. The majority of children interviewed demonstrated little activity during the day; nights are reserved for sleep<sup>29</sup>. The reverse is the case with child victims of CSEC, who reserve the night for acquiring income, thereby catching up on their lost sleep during the day. Whether it is a daytime or night activity, the remuneration is in cash, and in some cases the child is paid in kind. Although the tariff is well known, where possible, the price is negotiated between the buyer and the seller, (such is the case with the truck pushers, hair dressers, prostitutes, and retailers). As concerns alimentary strategies, they are all identical. The number of meals per day varies between 2 and 4, with a great majority having at their disposal, two meals per day; and these meals are taken either in the house or the market, or in a “touredo”. The children are able to feed themselves through the fruits of their labour, or in other cases through the good will of the people they live with (parents, relations and friends).

## 3. Sex for Survival

When talking about commercially sexually exploited children, 7 young victims of CSEC who were interviewed fall into this category. They are all under the age of 18. By the age of 14, four of these girls and at 15, three others had their first sexual experience, and all declared that it was consensual, with a stranger, for a minimum sum of money. The following are extracts from a series of discussions with three young girls involved in prostitution:

The first girl is 15 years old. When asked “at what age did you first have sexual intercourse?”, she said:

<sup>29</sup> With the exception of those who decided to spend the nights in video clubs watching pornographic films.



*I have known the boy since I was 12 years old. I had a child at the age of 13; my mother forced me to have it. She said, 'look at how your friends are struggling to feed their mothers, and she told me that I should not wait until I am 30 years old to have a child. When I go out, even to the market, I look for somebody to have a rendezvous with in the evening or during the day. The key for me is to have some money to give to my mother and to buy clothes for my child.*

The second is a 17 year old girl. She said<sup>30</sup> that she did not yet have breasts, allowing the assumption that she was less than 15 years old when she became sexually active. The following is a conversation had with her when asked what she was doing by the road in front of a bar<sup>31</sup>:

Girl: *"I sell groundnuts; if you wish, I can go and show you. I even cooked (...).*  
Where do you live?  
Girl: *I am not far; I am just behind there ...*  
Do you live alone?  
Girl: *No, I live with my elder sister, but she has gone out.*  
Is there water there?  
Girl: *Yes, there is everything.*  
Okay, how much do you take?  
Girl: *How much do you have first?*  
Tell me your price first.  
Girl: *Okay, say 2000 Frs (3.84 USD).*  
2000, but you are expensive! Let's say 500 Frs (USD 0.96).  
Girl: *What? 500 Frs? No it cannot work! And my sister will not accept that I go with a man for only 500 Frs. (USD 0.96). If you have 1500 Frs (USD 2.88), lets go.*  
No, it is too much. Let's say 1000 Frs (USD 1.92)  
Girl: *1000 Frs (USD 1.92)? But you won't be long, eh? Because I don't want my sister to meet me with a man who pays only 1500 Frs (USD 2.88) and wastes my time."*

The third girl is 13 years old and is the mother of a 10-month old baby who she carries around with her; she lives with her parents and is exploited by men who work in the bush. The researchers found her leaning on the wall of the entrance to the only bar in the Bertua roundabout. When asked what she was doing there, she responded:

Girl: *I come here mostly in the evening to see people pass by. I also discuss with my friends. I like seeing the truck drivers from the bush (...).*  
And do you always bring your child? Why didn't you leave him at home? Is he not feeling cold?  
*(She shakes her head forcefully) Who will take care of him when I am not*

<sup>30</sup> Met in the evening in front of a central market in Bertua.

<sup>31</sup> A male interviewer who accepted to play the role of the «client» conducted this interview. The meeting took place in front of a bar in the centre of the town.

*there? My mother? Or my sister? All the same, everybody goes out and I cannot leave my child alone.*

But can't you stay with him?

*Girl: What to do?*

I want that we should go somewhere. But I cannot go to your house. But there are many places here. There is an inn there. We can go and talk there.

*Girl: With the child?*

And so what? Does he disturb something?

Okay, I want that we go to my house. There are many good things there.

There is even milk for the baby, if you want.

*Girl: Where is your house?*

Over there in town. It's not far, we can take a motorbike. Don't you want to?

*Girl: No, it's that ... I don't want to go far off, and we won't be long, because my mother has kept somebody to pass the night with.*

These three interviews were carried out in the same line of thought: very young girls who are exposed to practices not authorised for their age. An adult (parents for reference) was in control of the operation even though they could not always be seen, and there was always an air of hunting instead of waiting. The girls go in search of clients, preferably in places where they have more chances of finding them, either to get money from them or simply for pleasure. The third characteristic is the object of poverty, which pushes these children to develop cunning strategies, thereby permitting them to maximise their profits in very little time. In one evening, it is crucial to maximise a certain number of contracts, therefore making more money or gifts in kind.

Among the reasons for which families push their children into prostitution is the desire to get money to contribute to the family income. In fact, faced with multiple challenges such as unwanted pregnancies, some families have no choice but to encourage their daughters into prostitution, especially in situations where mothers have no professional qualification. She does not ask herself if this profession provides enough money (no amount was given) but they are able to feed and clothe themselves, and carry out other charges, which are theirs. Two declared having deposited a portion of their earnings to a "friend" who controlled them by the road in the evening. The amount deposited depends on what the girl earns during the work and according to the needs of every one. Only one child receives lodging because she lives with her "manager". None of the children said they are controlled by these "managers"; they disposed a certain amount of liberty, the essential factor is to bring something home.

In practice, all of the girls declared the same scheme; they are generally sexually exploited in nightclubs, inns, on the roadside and in dark corners of the quarters. All the same, they struggle for the consummation of the act; some of them have no choice but to have the sexual transaction by the roadside, with the exception of those who take men to their houses. The girls consume drugs and alcohol; one girl stated that she started drinking at the age of 15, while the others evaded the question. Concerning pornography, all the children questioned claimed not to have watched any pornographic films or

to have been involved in any production (films, pictures, etc). Summarily, the sexual exploitation of children is a reality that remains well hidden behind other activities. More difficult is the commercial aspect of the act, because the researchers encountered underage girls who were involved in sexual activities for lucrative ends. Two of the girls behaved during the discussion in such a way that the researchers concluded that they are controlled by a third party, to whom they have to provide financial accounts. This can translate to the fact that in the collective mentality, the diverse trafficking that the children are submitted to is considered acceptable and cannot be stopped. As is later shown, parents and other resource persons encourage struggle as a proof of great value. The guilty acts are to the detriment of the child and optimal development will come to an end; but this needs time and political will from the State to efficiently measure and control CSEC.

## B. THE PARENTS

The family, particularly the parents, are the first ones responsible for the education of their children. They assure their well-being and proper development and strive to inculcate the culture that will permit them to live in a society in which they belong. In view of this study, parents have been held responsible for the commercial sexual exploitation of their children as it is they who force their children into it a very early age. The researchers met 47 parents: 25 in Yaounde, 12 in Bamenda and 10 in Bertua. The variables retained are by age, sex, educational level, matrimonial status, and profession. Some testimonies on the sexual life of their children are included.

### 1. Identification of parents

**Table 8: Regrouping of data on the parents**

Age	No.	Sex	No.	Edu. level	No.	Marital Status	No.	Occupation	No.
20-29	11	M	22	Primary	20	Married	35	Civil servant	4
30-39	15	F	25	Secondary	15	Single	3	Hustler	24
40-49	11		0	Tertiary	4	Widow	5	Agriculturalist	6
50-59	8		0	Illiterate	8	Divorced	4	Trader	7
60-69	2		0	RAS	0	Concubine	0	Housewife	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>47</b>		<b>47</b>		<b>47</b>		<b>47</b>

*Source: our inquiry May-June 2004.*

It was clear that among the interviewees, nobody recognises having children involved in commercial sexual exploitation. However, they were all aware of CSEC, but their views were not the same, especially when its various forms were described. The differences were influenced by especially religious values. The following shows the perspective of a Muslim parent who does not recognize any form of sexual exploitation in early marriages:

*“We found our parents doing this so we are just continuing. If a girl goes through puberty without getting married, she runs a great risk (...) we cannot control youths today; the best guarantee is to get them married as quickly as possible. And when she gets married, she has to honour her husband (...). It does not disturb me that my daughter gets married at the age of 10; it is even*

*for the best. It is reassuring and good if she can also have a baby quickly. It is you who thinks it is bad; we respect the tradition. Sure, I am against the violation of children, but if it is her husband, there is no violation (...) if all girls get married early, in time, we will not have issues such as AIDS and other diseases here. I cannot accept that my child enters a bar or nightclub, it is in such places that children become spoiled. I have an 8-year old child who usually sells groundnuts, her mother also sells in the market, but she does not enter bars like the others do.”<sup>32</sup>*

This testimony shows that for this parent, forceful or early marriages are excluded from factors constituting sexual exploitation of children. For this parent, like most other Muslims, religion or tradition justifies the practice. It is clear that this parent plays a great role in the family and encourages his child to respect his principles. On the contrary, Catholicism condemns early child marriages:

*“Imagine that I go out one evening for amusement and on the same occasion find a friend<sup>33</sup> for the night (...) (twinkle of the eye and laughs).<sup>34</sup> I am seated there with one of my colleagues, having a beer; I see two girls of about 11 and 12 years old who come and sit beside our table and ... they order drinks. I am surprised, and when I ask one of the girls who taught her how to drink, she responds that I am not the one who bought it. You needed to see! And later, a man enters the bar and proposes another drink. After sometime he enters a car with one of the girls (...) I suddenly think of my daughter who is sleeping at home. I assure you that if I meet her in a place like this and at what time, I will kill her.”<sup>35</sup>*

This parent does not approve of the situation of these children but his moral attitude is not encouraging. He would not allow his daughter to do the same thing, yet he abandons his wife and children to search for a woman for the night. His attitude is not dissimilar from that of an exploiter of young girls. In evidence, CSEC is widespread in all three towns. All the interviewed parents condemn all forms of child degradation, even though it means something different to each of them.

### C. THE EXPLOITERS

In light of the study, the exploiter is somebody who employs children for sexual activities that bring benefits. Unable to find persons during the research who would openly declare their exploitation of children, the researchers targeted persons who have children at their disposal (either privately or commercially), who are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. Twelve persons were interviewed based on the following criteria:

<sup>32</sup> Man, civil servant, Muslim, age 57 years.

<sup>33</sup> A girl

<sup>34</sup> The respondent is married and father of children ...

<sup>35</sup> Man, civil servant, 48 years.

Table 9: Regrouping of data on exploiters

Age	No.	Sex	No.	Educ. level	No.	Marital status	No.	Profession.	No.
20-29	4	M	8	Primary	7	Married	15	Civil servant	8
30-39	9	F	13	Secondary	11	Single	5	Barman	7
40-49	8			Tertiary	1	Widow	0	Bar-restaurant	2
				Illiterate	2	Divorce	0	Trader	3
				RAS	-	Concubine	1	Mechanic	1
Total	21		21		21		21		21

Source: *Our inquiry May-June 2004.*

All the people interviewed acknowledged having employed girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 18 years old. The work for which these children are employed is diverse, depending on the profession of the person questioned. Civil servants hire children to help around the house (cleaning plates, shopping, cooking) babysitting and paying bills. Traders employ children in their shops; bar and restaurant owners employ children to cook, serve clients or to wash plates; and mechanics hire children to help in their garages, and are paid at the end of the day. In all the cases, the contract is concluded verbally. The reason children are employed instead of adults is to help the children to gain money honestly and save it to open their own business later. The nature of payment does not totally vary; children are paid in kind or in cash. Not all the persons interviewed are recognized as “exploiters”, but they did say that they have heard about it in town. They denied having anything to do with exploitative activities, as one of them introduced a slight difference in the following testimony:

*“I have my inn here. When the drivers arrive, they pay for a room and then they go out, maybe to eat, or even to look for women, but I have never seen anybody bring a young girl to work here. And even if someone brings a young girl, if he has paid for his room and arrives at midnight or 2 o’clock in the morning, I will not get up from my post to see who he is with. And when the girl leaves in the morning, it’s not my problem. I intervene only if there is an incident, if the materials are endangered, or if somebody is wounded. Apart from that, I only take money. And the women who come here, even if they are young girls, are they obliged to?”*

A pertinent question arises if the transaction is done in the presence and consciousness of all. The researchers also interviewed a young man who was a former owner of an inn in Bonis<sup>36</sup>, but who has since changed occupations:

*All girls you see there now are calm because it’s still afternoon. If you arrive here at night, you will see. Here, once a girl starts developing, she follows her sister to the roundabout. And that is how their education is ruined. I used to see them arriving two or three times at night, which means the first comes with a driver, finishes and leaves. She later comes with another client, etc. ...*

<sup>36</sup> Bonis is a quarter in Bertua town.

*that's why you see them like that. See for example this one, you can take her to be 25 years old, but she is not yet 15 years old. She is already like an old woman, because of bad things. I have a niece here, unfortunately she is in the farm, and I would have shown her to you. She started like this . . . I am tired of beating her. Whenever I went to work at night, she would go to the roundabout, and her mother would be there and say nothing. I was told she goes to the other inns, which are a little further away. When she became pregnant, I was tired, but she aborted. But I almost killed her with my hands! And now she has forgotten about school! She wants to be like her sisters and the other girls here. And since she does not work, she is left with only one thing: the morning at the farm, the evening at the roundabout (...) with AIDS at the end of the road."*

Thus, exploiters do not have the courage or the will to recognize the reality. And they are understood simply, because the recognition of an immoral character is the immediate end to the activity.

#### D. THE RESOURCE PERSONS ENCOUNTERED

The resource persons contacted for this report include all moral and physical persons concerned with the preservation of child rights. A total of 31 resource persons were contacted, both State officials and civil society actors, including officials responsible for the provincial and subdivision delegation of Social Affairs, Women's Affairs, police officials, NGO representatives and members of the medical field.

##### 1. MINAS-MINCOF

All the resource persons have heard about the commercial sexual exploitation of children and recognize that the phenomenon is prevalent in larger towns in Cameroon. Exceptionally, a MINAS employee preferred to talk about sexual abuse and not "exploitation", and also refused to accept use of the term "for economic aims". For certain resource persons, besides the classic example of a girl who exchanges some of her values for money, there are most often cases where the child is first flattered out of greed, or encouraged by the parents or guardian "to be good to this person". The more dangerous case is when the mother initiates the child at a tender age (6-7 years old) to have sexual relations or introduces phallic objects into her vagina.

##### 2. Police Station

At the level of the police, especially at the police station, is a social service in charge of resolving cases necessitating moral intervention before taking the matter to the tribunal in case of its resolution. One police officer said:

*Most often girls of 12 to 15 years old, barely pubescent, are brought into the station at night after being found in bars taking drugs. Since we cannot tell them that they were arrested because of their ages (the minor is irresponsible in front of the law), we give other reasons, which are also accurate: detention due to drug possession, we have a very repressive role, we cannot*

*tell them not to go out. This is not part of our prerogative. We waited for them to go out and we looked for them. We closed a bar recently because girls were dancing naked (...)*<sup>37</sup>

### 3. The medical field

Members of the medical field react in the same way, that of action after the act. In fact, they cited many cases of violation or other types of abuse of children received in consultation at night. At times there are cases of chronic STIs or AIDS that they have to control “on girls who can’t even say what happened to them”. They face a population whose health is difficult to control because they are sceptical about the values of modern medicine. The discussion below brings out the risk of early sexuality:

*“We receive at least 3 cases per week. If it’s not rape, it’s a complicated pregnancy, or pains from early sexual intercourse (...) once we even had a boy who was badly hurt (...) you know the human body follows very precise steps, especially a woman’s. Before the age of 18, a woman’s body is immature. It is true that women give birth before this age, but it’s not without difficulty. If there are no consequences today, there will be later. From a medical perspective, when the genital organ is not in place, the young girl runs the risk of vaginal infections. The walls of the vagina are twisted, almost like a folded carpet, especially when there has been violence. I received a case yesterday; the girl is at the observation block for examination. The only solution will be surgical intervention to try to straighten or redress her vagina, but one thing is certain, she will never give birth. If she even tries it will kill her. Also at a certain age, the womb is too straight to carry a child to the end. In the best of cases, a caesarean section is recommended (parents refuse of course) and if she gives birth with difficulties, she and the baby are held in backlash on the physical as well as psychological pain since the nerves are touched. She risks total paralysis and also the impossibility of ever giving birth, even to carry a pregnancy to term. What I do at my level is to sensitize the parents and their children on the difficulties of sexuality and early birth. Most of them ask me to mind my business (...)”.*

We were invited to walk around the examination ward of Bertua Hospital, where we saw, among others, a 12-year old girl who had come to give birth. Her child, a boy whose face was unbalanced, with a cold and inert membrane was by her side. She was forced by her parents to give birth under difficult circumstances in a “Health Centre”. She ended up destroying her inferior abdomen and dismantling her femur at the basin. A few months earlier, a caesarean section was suggested, but was refused on condition that “others give birth like this”. She will never walk (except for a miracle) if she gets out alive. Her mother beside her had a triumphant look, proud that her daughter had given an heir to her husband, an important man in their community. As can be seen from this testimony, the consequences can be dire for a young girl who has sexual relationships at a young age.

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<sup>37</sup> Proposition by assistant commissioner of Bertua.

## II. PLACES WHERE CSEC TAKES PLACE

Sexual exploitation is manifested in many ways. The roadside, the prison, the family, an inn or strip clubs can be cited as some of the places where children can be sexually exploited. By the roadsides, children are mainly victims of manipulation by certain persons. The sexual exploiters are either bisexual or people who visit traditional healers and are advised to have sexual intercourse with children as part of a ritual to cure them of certain infections, especially HIV/AIDS.

Michael, 15 years old, describes the circumstances among many:

*“Like all evenings if I don’t go to Abbia<sup>38</sup> to work, I go to Campero.<sup>39</sup> A man came out of a taxi and started asking me questions. I answered. Later he asked me to go and wait for him a little further towards the commercial centre. Once he arrived, he showed me his sex and said, “You see that it’s not big? Let’s go, I will give you 5000 FCFA?”<sup>40</sup> Since I was far from my friends, I went with him towards the central market where there were guards on duty. Since they know me, I told them what he wanted; they caught him, searched him and found 3500 FCFA. I was given 1500 FCFA and they took 2000 FCFA and told the man to go and never come around there again”.*

Cases like Michael’s are frequent and often street children are the victims. This story led the researchers to the prison to assess the living conditions of minors who are locked up. These children are poor and demoralized and get involved in situations that sometimes cost them their lives. They carry out sexual intercourse with those condemned to death in exchange for food or money. Constrained to do it from the beginning, the child becomes used to it after a few months or years. Sometimes they imitate these acts with other children. Once out of prison they either continue or change their lifestyles, but in most cases they will want to practice this on younger children than them and usually for money. The activities carried out by girls are often as servants in bars or dancers by the roadside. As a servant in a bar or as a dancer at an inn she is ready to give in to all demands. The girl usually depends on the owners of the bar or the inn to whom she pays a percentage of what she earns. In families, CSEC is complex because it is diffuse and dissimulated. It moves from incest to rape and encouragement to prostitution. Oftentimes the parents send the girls to the road. Caretakers of the bars mostly take girls from poor families. The case of this 15-year old girl testifies:

*“I came to my auntie’s house to continue my studies and work at the bar at night. When I arrived, my auntie asked me to wait and go to school the following year, so that I could get used to the town. Later she asked me to sell at the bar everyday. When a client makes advances towards me I tell my auntie and she says, “you are a young and beautiful girl, it’s normal that men get interested in you.” One evening she came and asked me to be nice to*

<sup>38</sup> Cinema Hall

<sup>39</sup> Bar situated at the centre of the town

<sup>40</sup> Equivalent of less than ten dollars



*the clients, they are not wicked and will not harm me, she said. When a rich man comes she asks me to serve him at the saloon behind the bar. When I get there he proposes money and asks me to sleep with him. I do not have the right to refuse otherwise I will be sent back to the village. After 30 minutes my auntie comes and asks if he is nice to me. She takes the money and in the evening gives me little to buy clothes.”*

This is the same road that most girls follow and become involved in prostitution.

### III. CAUSES OF THE PHENOMENON

The causes of commercial sexual exploitation of children are numerous and diverse. This report is presenting and analyzing the main causes without generalizing. Commercial sexual exploitation of children poses a complex problem; it is closely linked to the social and economic milieu in which it is situated.

**Table 10: Causes of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

Table 10 shows the variety of causes that are at the origin of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Some causes appear in the table more than

<b>Children</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Exploiters</b>	<b>Resource persons</b>
Abandoned by parents	Poverty	No idea	Loophole in care policy of children
Attracted by the town	Irresponsibility of parents	Irresponsibility of parents	Ineffectiveness of law
Family conflicts	Lack of education	Material poverty	Poverty of parents
Academic failure	Unemployment	Moral poverty	Irresponsibility of parents
Gain money	Perversity	Sects	Absence of education
Support to the parents	Effect of mode	Illiteracy	Unemployment
No choice	Influence of media	Cheap handiwork	Perversity
Poverty of parents	Influence of sects	Sexual dissatisfaction	Influence of media

once, but poverty of the family is a major cause for concern.

#### 5.1. Unemployment and family poverty

Unemployment (lack of payable employment) is one of the root causes of sexual exploitation of children. The revenue is so small that parents are unable to take care of the minimum social utilities of their children. Under employment of parents is a vicious cycle that is difficult to banish. If parents cannot find jobs or do not earn sufficient incomes, they turn a blind eye to the illicit activities of their children, if they are not themselves pushing their children into these situations. Lack of employment opportunities aggravate

the poverty of the family, which is partly explained by the difficult economic situation of Cameroon for many years now<sup>41</sup>.

Experience has shown that poverty, unemployment and commercial sexual exploitation of children are closely linked. Being poor means having limited social amenities with no investment capital to improve oneself or to make a meaningful contribution to community development. In such a desperate situation, the priority is a daily search for food. Therefore child protection is not an individual or community priority and the commercial sexual exploitation of children is among the survival strategies because the poorer a family is, the more each member of the family has to contribute to the welfare in monetary terms or in provisions. The question of feeding is essential because the first concern for a poor family is to make sure its members have at least a single meal per day. This situation also explains why certain families send their children to the roadside and pretend not to notice the conditions to which they are submitted. For the moment, all activities that contribute to the acquisition of daily bread are welcomed. For the parents, it is essential for children to have something to eat regardless of the means through which it is obtained.

What is necessary to understand is that sending a child to “sell sex” under callous conditions, and being conscious of the consequences is the most irrational decision that a parent can take. In this situation, the irrational becomes rational because the poor families have a logic based on short-term survival strategies. Focusing on the long-term only satisfies the minimum, fundamental needs. Poverty brings about sexual exploitation of children, which brings about misery and under-development.

## **5. 2. The child: skills easily exploited**

A number of studies have proven that infants’ handicrafts are cheaper than those of adults. Most often, small enterprises employ children for poor remuneration on the pretext of learning a trade or “helping” the child, as was seen earlier. The remuneration of children is reduced to a modest sum (pocket money) seen from time to time, and is sometimes the child’s only payment. Aside from the economic outcome of the work, there is the psychological outcome, which explains the use of a child’s skills: the children are less conscious of their rights as compared to the adults, they are more disciplined, less absent and also accept difficult work without complaints. Because their activities are illegal, they cannot report to the authorities or form pressure groups or unions. The skills of children are thus easily and very cheaply exploited and this is done at all levels.

## **5.3. The dissolution of family links**

Poverty is certainly a fundamental cause. This notion often constitutes a reason to subjectively justify the behaviour making child prostitution acceptable in some societies in the country. The economic causes are certainly at the origin of this phenomenon of sexual exploitation, but are far

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<sup>41</sup> Poverty affects more than 50% of the Cameroonian population.

from being explained entirely. It is important to take into account the dissolution of social and family links; affective environments found in the family are missing. Issues such as drinking alcohol, remarrying, infidelity, and divorce foster poor relationships between children and their parents. These types of situations lead children to abandon family homes very early. Consultation with parents and resource persons permitted the researchers to note various problems that occur in the family. The most common is a climate of violence that causes children and parents to lose confidence in each other.

#### **5.4. The misdeeds of the media**

Media constitute an important cause in the installation of CSEC. Oftentimes they present immoral and unsupported images to children. In some television series, sex is very prevalent. Note should be taken that the fault does not necessarily lie with the media itself, but with the manner in which it presents and sensationalises sex. The media do not have to serve a hot plate, but should try to be selective with respect to the culture and type of society that we want to build. Certain persons think that the media are the actors in the socialization of the masses; others think that the media “succeed where the parents have failed.” It is then the situation that, “the media diffuse more information on sexuality and not on sexual education, which is supposed to have a particular and articulated method.”<sup>42</sup> An increase in video clubs that supply pornographic films should also be highlighted. This circulation of films carries doubt since the information on sex is poorly controlled and poorly assimilated by the children, who later try to reproduce the same scenes. These are elements of vulnerability that weaken the ethics and morals present in society.

#### **5.5. The pandemic of AIDS**

The inquiry also reveals that HIV/AIDS is one of the consequences of commercial sexual exploitation of children. HIV/AIDS is not only limited to towns; it is now increasing at an alarming rate in the rural areas and has affected the peasant population, particularly those of a reproductive age (from 15 to 45 years old). Consequently, a great number of people in families die of AIDS and the responsibility becomes very heavy on the survivors, particularly children. A study conducted by UNICEF in six countries in East and West Africa showed that “HIV/AIDS destabilizes families and increases the possibility of exploitation. Just at the age where children need to go to school, the heavy and new responsibility of heading the family forces them to abandon their studies” in order to carry on practices which are not of their ages.

#### **5.6. Other causes**

The inquiry identifies a lack of dialogue between children and parents as another factor pushing children into commercial sexual exploitation. It was reported that some parents do not communicate well with or educate their

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<sup>42</sup> Tsala Tsala Philippe, Mutattion No. 204 of March 1999.

children on sex and sexuality. Instead they shy away from such discussions. To satisfy their curiosity and to find answers to certain questions on sex, children rely on friends, on the media, video clubs, and so on, which spread all types of information and images, mostly without much consideration.

### **5.7. The consequences**

The commercial sexual exploitation of children remains a preoccupying problem, with the gravity of abuses and risks they are exposed to. The destructive consequences on the physical and psychological development of a child are an object of the violence perpetrated. The children are also exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which today constitutes a world concern, and Africa is the continent which is most affected.

## CHAPTER IV: MANIFESTATION OF CSEC IN CAMEROON

### Child Trafficking

According to UNICEF (2006) “A ‘child victim of trafficking’ is any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, either within or outside a country”. The major statistics of the UN show that 1.2 million children are victims of trafficking worldwide every year<sup>43</sup>.

Almost every country is touched in one way or another, as country of origin, destination or transit of children who are trafficked. In Cameroon, this practice is certainly gaining grounds, but this study reveals that trafficking of children for sexual purposes, child pornography and child sex tourism are not very serious phenomena in the country.

Child trafficking is a well-developed activity in Cameroon, due to its geographical position. The country serves as entry into Central Africa and a doorway to the Atlantic and the Wouri Division of Douala, Cameroon. The arrest at Wouri in 2004 of the notorious boat “ITINERO” enabled the researchers to discover the degree of child trafficking in West and Central Africa and particularly in Cameroon. In fact, the boat had on board an appreciable number of children destined for sexual and economic exploitation to a country, which has remained unknown to the public to date.

This study carried out in the towns of Yaounde, Bertoua and Bamenda shows advanced patterns of child trafficking activity in the North West Provincial capital of Bamenda, and in Yaounde. In fact, the North West Province is the province of origin, Bamenda the town of transit, Yaounde, Douala and Kribi are the receiving towns of trafficked children.

The children come from all over Bafut, Bali Nyonga, Mantum, Bambili, Santa and the small Bororo community stationed in the region. Child trafficking is an activity which is illegal, but very profitable for those who perpetrate it. It dates as far back as the colonial period, during the creation of the large sugarcane plantations in Mbanjock CDC in Buea, banana plantations in Djombé, pendja and Loum in the Mungo. The population reputed as good and dynamic workers were recruited either by force or deceit and transferred to the agricultural regions. A majority of them were young boys most of whom were between 15 and 18 years old.

Recently, the phenomenon has taken a different dimension, the trafficking has transformed from exploitation for economic purposes to sexual trafficked children are young girls between ages of 12 and 18 years. Certainly, the demand for boys is tending towards pimp practices. A traditional authority in North West explained that men come with expensive cars proposing to help young boys by taking them to towns with better job opportunities. However, further investigations reveal that the boys were placed in a network of paedophilia and homosexuality in Douala, Yaounde or Kribi or in Limbe, for

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<sup>43</sup> The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) May 2006 “Child Protection information Sheet”. Accessed 14 May 2006 from: <http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/trafficking.pdf>

sexual exploitation in tourism. Children are victims of manipulation by certain people. They are diverted from schools, and sometimes kidnapped from the interior villages when their parents are in the farms.

This study reveals that girls with low levels of literacy are more affected by trafficking as they can easily serve as goods for marketing and easy trading. They are docile and can easily be blackmailed. Traditional rulers in Cameroon have denounced the practice and some of them have personally pledged to eradicate child trafficking in their regions.

Child trafficking involves a well-structured network, with the family as a contact point. Parents sometimes give their children to third parties for exchange of a few bank notes. Guardians and relatives can also be accomplices and sometimes authors of this odious crime. Some relatives act as recruiters; they promise victims work and/or, registration in schools, for example. Once the children arrive in Yaounde, Douala, Bertoua, Limbe or Kribi, the recruitment is effected and they are handed over to intermediaries.

The intermediaries are generally people who are familiar with the region and travel between the villages and Bamenda. Unverified information indicates that some influential people perpetrate child trafficking in the region. They go to Bambili, Mantui and Bali promising to help parents who are living in abject poverty in villages by taking care of their children. Once in Bamenda the intermediaries give the children to suppliers, who provide the children with falsified documents, such as birth certificates identity cards and other documents that would facilitate their travel without being suspected by the police.

Child victims of trafficking are transferred to other parts of the country by truck drivers who operate in the relevant regions of Cameroon. They have the addresses and other contacts and they also know the different destinations, transit and receiving points of child victims of trafficking. The chain of criminals continues with the arrival of corrupt civil servants, employers and suppliers of general services, proprietors of establishments such as hotels, inns, nightclubs, bars, video clubs and cafés. Once in the hands of the exploiters the trafficked children are placed in torturous situations stripped of their documents, and physically and sexually abused. Child trafficking for commercial and sexual aims has led to other activities such as child pornography and sex tourism, which compromise the rights of the child.

### **Child Pornography**

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (18 January 2002) in Article 2(c) defines Child pornography as “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or representation of the sexual parts of a child, the dominant characteristic of which is depiction for a sexual purpose”<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (18 January 2002)

Children who are victims of trafficking for sexual purposes are vulnerable to being used in the production of pornographic materials. An unconfirmed report indicates that child victims of trafficking, especially for sexual purposes are required to satisfy many sex exploiters and are sometimes forced to pose for pornographic materials. The production and consumption of child pornography is on the increase in Cameroon as a result of improvements in information technology.

During an interview with video club managers, as part of the data collection process for this study, it was revealed that some West and Central African youths between the ages of 14 and 20 were used in the production of pornographic materials in the country. It was revealed that while some of the victims were forced into the act, others were forced to do it because of the promise of money involved.

Among factors that make children vulnerable to child pornography include child trafficking, ignorance and poverty. In an interview with an expatriate suspected of being involved in the production of child pornography in the country, it was revealed that demand for child pornography is fuelled by the erroneous belief that nude images of young children attract adults in search of strong sensations and sexual stimulation.

A new form of child pornography has developed in some towns in Cameroon. In the three towns where the research was carried out, Yaoundé and Douala are the most affected by child pornography, which consists of many strip clubs where boys and girls pose naked.

The production and consumption of child pornography are encouraged by men and women who support deviant sexual practices. For many youths between 12 and 20 years old, it is a means of getting out of the poverty that is striking the Cameroonian society. Quarters such as Ekounou (Cabaret “central park”) Mvog-Ada (Pakita or the “carrefour de la joie”) and Mini Ferme Melen are among places where boys and girls exhibit their nudity and pose for pornographic images.

### **Child Sex Tourism**

This research reveals that their beautiful beaches of the towns of Kribi and Limbe, which are located along the coast, attract many tourists some of whom come to the region with the aim of sexually exploiting children. Certain hotel and entertainment establishments organize cultural dances performed by children as a strategy to attract customers, a majority of who are Western tourists. As a follow-up to the cultural performances, young boys and girls are identified and targeted for sexual exploitation by child sex tourists, who make arrangements with the pimps. Sexual exploitation of children in tourism in Cameroon takes place in hotels, nightclubs, and during cabarets.

Most child victims of trafficking are placed in these establishments to be sexually exploited by tourists. They are therefore to satisfy the tourists who have deviant and illegal sexual interests in children. These tourists at times

give the children small tips in exchange for sexual services; the tourists pay the proprietors of the establishment directly, who are then expected to pay the children. Some of the children might be lucky to receive very insignificant prices, while others receive nothing at all. The people in charge of these establishments operate with impunity, breaking the laws of the State, and the country, in order to please the tourists who bring in money.

The local ring of criminals involved in child sex tourism in Cameroon invest a lot of money to manipulate and corrupt authorities and irresponsible parents, only to expose innocent children to commercial sexual exploitation and to satisfy the sexual desires of child sex tourists.

The study reveals that the advent of computers, notably the Internet, has given sex tourism a different face in Cameroon. Transactions are done through photo emissions on the Internet.

### **Early Marriages**

The early marriage of young girls is a phenomenon that exists in Adamawa, North and Far North regions of Cameroon. It is a practice that involves the sending of girls between the ages of 12 and 16 to be married. The research did not find any evidence of early marriages in Yaoundé, Bertoua or Bamenda. However, the following was noted in the three Northern Provinces.

#### **1. The foundation of early marriages**

Early marriage is an old practice much like the civilization that practices it. It has ancestral and religious origins. Early marriage originates from ancestral customs, traditions, religious principles and morals and from poverty spirit like material and especially the illiterate status of the population with some having about 80%.

These traditional, customary and religious practices do not take into consideration the rights of the child. Customs originating from traditions are fields of practices of early marriages. This phenomenon favours the non-respect of the rights of the child and smashes the moral and physical integrity of the child. Parental authority is also considered one of the causes of early marriages. Parents are very authoritative in these regions; they exert pressure, blackmail and physical violence on their children, especially girls who are married off without their consent.

Tradition also influences the practice of early marriages. In regions where the phenomenon is practised, young and inexperienced girls are sent to get married before the age of 16 years, which is the lawful age of marriage for girls in Cameroon.

High rates of illiteracy in the population of these regions is another cause of early marriage; almost 70% of parents living in these milieu are illiterate and do not understand the degrading consequences of economic and sexual exploitation of young girls in early marriages. Traditions inherited from ancestral cultures, some of which are out dated, also contribute to early marriages. The practice is often seriously defended by the elderly, who try to



safeguard the history of the community. The poverty in villages also accelerates the phenomenon of early marriage in Cameroon.

## **2. Manifestation of early marriages**

Young girls between 12 and 16 years old are offered to 50 to 80 year-old men who are willing to pay very high bride prices for the children. In early marriages, children are placed in situations where they are exploited economically and sexually. Because of their immaturity and naivety, they are often docile, easy to track and hardly have the courage to participate in debates concerning important decisions in family and their households. They therefore adhere without questions to whatever their parents decide for them. The girls do not have any say in their marriages. Custom, being the backbone in this practice, encourages, protects, authorises and legalises early marriages. In the name of custom, parents with a very strong family authority profit from this situation and literally sell their daughters to men who are at times the parents' elders.

In some parts of Cameroon, men touch the stomach of a pregnant woman declaring their intent to marry the child if it is a girl either for themselves or their sons in search of a wife. They give food, jewellery and other gifts to the mother of the girl and the child herself as part of the bride price. This continues until the girl is 12 years old when she begins puberty. In effect, the men start paying the bride price of the foetus while still in her mother's womb.

As the role of the mother is very important in the early marriage of a daughter, they are pressured and manipulated by family members: husbands, brothers and parents, to persuade the young girl into the marriage by convincing them that marrying at a very young age is prestigious and a model of success and dignity. For these mothers, a young girl cannot get happiness except through early marriage. For certain communities, elderly men ask young girls to marry their sons who have gone to study or to look for jobs in town. This is generally the case among the Bamileke, who live in the West of Cameroon.

Early marriage can make the lives of children miserable, as they live in slave-like conditions and cannot defend themselves from sexual abuse and other physical violence. The young girl is thus violated, tortured, sequestered, maltreated, humiliated, destabilised, traumatised, reduced to submission and left to the whims and caprices of the husband, who after all becomes a dictator. For the parent, the child is a source of revenue and therefore would not hesitate to use their power to put under control any rebellious spirits.

An undocumented investigation carried out in Yaoundé showed that young boys from the West Province, who live in town, have wives chosen for them by their parents in the village. According to the parents, girls in towns do not know how to take care of their husbands. They balk at the children and have a sense of criticism; they are emancipated and very dangerous for their sons. For these reasons, many parents encourage early marriages for their children.

The belief among those who encourage early marriages is that young girls are more cultured and when scolded become submissive in the name of certain customs or a religious marriage.

## **CHAPTER VI: REHABILITATION OF CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

Rehabilitation consists of restoring the dignity, integrity and rights of a child victim of abuse and exploitation through treatment programmes and re-insertion. In Cameroon, NGOs such as ASSEJA and Nkumu Fed Fed have rehabilitation programmes for child victims of trafficking and slavery. The rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking and slavery takes place at the ASSEJA Headquarters in Yaoundé and its branch offices at Bertoua and Nyom in Yaoundé. ASSEJA rehabilitates hundreds of child victims of slavery; social workers identify and engage them, their families and exploiters in dialogue.

### **The Process of Rehabilitation**

NGOs like ASSEJA and Nkumu Fed Fed have, as their vision and objectives, the rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking, exploitation and slavery. The rehabilitation starts with the removal of a child from the area of exploitation, followed by psychosocial therapy. They are later trained in income generating activities. The youths under apprenticeship will need to wait until the end of their training so that the project can help them in the future. As part of the rehabilitation process, families are also enrolled in non-formal education and skills training. The rehabilitation projects of child victims of trafficking enable families to rely on income generating activities in order to prevent them from selling or giving away their children to be “taken care of” by unscrupulous child traffickers. The following are steps adopted by ASSEJA in rehabilitating child victims of trafficking:

#### **Identification**

Strategies used in identifying children to be rehabilitated include going to the places where they are being exploited and organizing community sensitization workshops. These sessions act as gateways for the ASSEJA researchers to carry out social investigations in order to identify the children to be rehabilitated. This is followed by a localization of the places where the children are grouped, such as the roadsides. Here are found child victims of sexual exploitation and other forms of hard labour. The research team contacts them either by taking part in their activities or by asking them to offer the team services such as washing cars. The team also buys goods that the children sell (bonbons, biscuits, oranges, etc). In a tactical way, members of the research team ask the children questions leading up to why they on the roadsides.

Generally, the children on the roadside are under the supervision of a group head, who could be the eldest of them. This research shows that 70% of the children (boys and girls) on the roadsides have experienced sexual violence and have been placed in situations where they are exploited sexually and economically. Most of the young girls found at the roadsides were former recruits from cabarets and dancing bars where they served as servants and at the same time rendered sexual services to exploiters at the establishments.

### **Education for life**

In their quest to help under privileged children and youths who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, ASSEJA and Nkumu Fed Fed conduct education programmes to enhance smooth rehabilitation of the children and youths. Their civic education programmes comprise six levels that a child has to go through before graduating. The organizations have put these programmes in all their structures in Yaoundé and Bertoua.

ASSEJA's training centres at Nyom in Etoudi, Yaoundé was created to implement this phase of education for child victims of slavery, trafficking, sexual exploitation and the worst forms of labour. ASSEJA promotes gender equality to ensure that young boys and girls trained may have equal opportunities.

### **Professional training**

During the training, which is a part of their rehabilitation process, the children are taken care of by ASSEJA. They are trained in a trade of their choice in private workshops or in ASSEJA's Productive Apprenticeship Workshop. The children are trained in crafts and other skills like sewing, hairdressing, embroidery, mechanics, carpentry, etc. While the social workers give them civic and social education, the head of each workshop takes care of their professional training. The children and youths are trained and housed by ASSEJA and Nkumu Fed Fed during period, which usually lasts for 2 years, after which the child graduates from the centres with training certificates.

### **Installations and their follow up**

The children benefit from specialized skills which they use to gain employment. They are either placed in ASSEJA's Productive Apprenticeship Workshops or in other relevant workshops that ASSEJA arranges for a considerable period of time. Social workers from ASSEJA follow up on the progress of the children in the income generating activities or employment in conformity with recognized international standards.

ASSEJA has a support system whereby older children, also trained by ASSEJA, provide emotional support to younger children who are being rehabilitated. Older children provide support in skills training workshops at Mvog-Ada, Nkonkana and Emana in Yaoundé. Nkumu Fed Fed has similar support systems in their programmes in Bamenda.

### **Success Stories**

Since 1994, ASSEJA has rehabilitated, trained and found jobs for 300 street children, most of whom were child victims of slavery.

through the ILO-IPEC action programme for rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims of slavery supported by the "Programme de Lutte Contre la Traite des Enfants à des Fins d'Exploitation de leur Travail en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (LUTRENA)" being implemented by ASSEJA and Nkumu Fed Fed, ASSEJA has rehabilitated 51 victims of child slavery in Yaounde and Bertoua; 33 were in carpentry and automechanics while 18 others were reunified with their families to continue schooling.

Nkumu Fed Fed also provides skills training, non-formal education and rehabilitated 70 child victims of trafficking and slavery from November 2004 to November 2005. Rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking is a continuous process, despite the enormous challenges involved. Nevertheless, these actions have to continue as the rehabilitation of each child is of great interest to the state.

## CHAPTER VII: RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of this study, it is thus possible to propose recommendations to counter the commercial the sexual exploitation of children in Cameroon. The social actors concerned are the State, international organs, NGOs and families. Faced with this determination, it will be unrealistic to think that CSEC can be eliminated without proposing solutions of replacement to the family and to the children themselves.

The principles put in place to better carryout these reforms are:

- Sensitisation;
- Legal reform;
- Census;
- Taking charge and supervision;
- Professional and school training;
- Social reinsertion;
- Financial support sufficient for the field actors; and
- Fighting against poverty in the family (support to income generating activities)

From these principles, table below was developed:

Table 11: Recapitulation of practical propositions

Objectives	Strategies and actions	Actors	Population concerned/ action
To protect children from commercial sexual exploitation	Create a code or legislation to prevent and protect children from CSEC	- Public administration - Legislators - Researchers - International organs - NGOs	Children, parents, employers, NGOs, primary schools, secondary schools, universities
- To sensitize the population on CSEC; and - Sensitize the population on rights that will protect children.	Edit the synthesis of judicial texts on the rights of children and to carry out wide public sensitization on it in newspapers, local radio stations, television, in primary and secondary schools, and universities	-Public Administration - Researchers - NGOs - Primary and secondary school and university teachers	Children, parents, exploiters, NGOs, primary and secondary schools and universities.
To promote research	Support wide studies on the theme of CSEC	- Public and private administration - Researchers - International organs - Enterprises - Church	Public administration, international organs, national NGOs and universities.
To elaborate a policy	Create accompanying	-Public	Child victims of CSEC

of reintegration of children who have undergone sexual violence	structures and practical training of child victims of CSEC	administration -UNICEF - Civil Society (NGOs, church and others)	
To finance a programme for the fight against CSEC	Elaborate clear and operational plans on the collection of funds	-Public administration - International organs -NGOs	-Public administration, international organs and NGOs
To publicize the dangers linked to CSEC	Lobbying and sensitisation with the support of administrative, religious and traditional authorities exploiters, families and children, towards adoption of preventive measures	-Public administration International organs NGOs, schools - Media (radio, television, newspaper)	Public administration, civil society, deputies, religious and traditional authorities, community leaders, parents, and children
Support the positive experiences in the fight against CSEC	Organize seminars with partners in the sub-regions	-Public administration - International organs - Researchers -Civil society - Media	Public administration, international organs, researchers
Promote judicial assistance to children who have suffered from sexual violence and to promote their dignity	Install counselling centres for children, parents and exploiters in quarters under risk. Reinforce the capacities of social assistance in charge of children	- Public administration - Judges - Civil society - UNICEF -Religious and traditional authorities	Children, families and exploiters
Develop and support development initiatives of demoralized families and exploiters	-Support families in income generating activities -Put in place measures for the counselling of families -Educate families on their responsibilities -Develop and support flourishing initiatives (economic sectors)	- Public administration - Enterprises - NGOs	Poor families
To reinforce the capacities of social actors and forces of law and order (FLO) in developing specific training for the sexual	-Finance the training of social actors engaged in the fight against child labour	- Public administration - International organs - Enterprise	- Public administration and NGOs

exploitation of children			
To integrate the fight against sexual exploitation into the last programme of the fight against poverty	Elaborate specific projects of protection and care of children sexually exploited. To make the program for the fight against poverty operational	-Public administration -UNICEF -Enterprises - NGOs	- Public administration, international organs, enterprises, NGOs, children and parents

Sources: our inquiry May-June 2004

It is recommended that the completion of this work be based on themes including:

- Evaluation of experiences on the fight against CSEC in the sub-regions;
- Education and health of sexually exploited children;
- Evaluation of knowledge on judicial documents on the rights and protection of children at work: the case of sexually exploited children; and
- Sexual exploitation of children in African cultures.

In line with these recommendations are three concepts for better control of the fight against CSEC: social mobilisation, sensitisation and education/training.

### **Social mobilisation**

Social mobilisation around the fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children calls for consecutive action to consciousness, dialogue and negotiation that favour the respect of the child. In general, it is not possible to succeed initiatives of social mobilisation or produce durable changes without the collaboration and will of the government. Engaging in useful dialogue and introducing a change with those who intentionally or by ignorance, perpetuate sexual exploitation of children, constitutes a great challenge.

### **Sensitisation**

Sensitisation campaigns of the population are essential. In order for them to be effective, the parents and the exploiters should be involved. Emphasis should be made of the risks on: the physical and psychological development of the child without forgetting the dangers that CSEC can also have on the development of African countries. The youth who are supposed to build Africa in the long-term have been destabilised without any possibility of defence against a potentially destructive phenomenon.

### **Education and training of the child**

Education and training are important factors in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Given the fact that most child victims of sexual violence do not wish or cannot continue education, it is important in the fight against CSEC, to create educational opportunities for children.



## CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

In line with this research, the existence of commercial sexual exploitation of children explains the disorder of undeveloped countries, particularly Cameroon, in the control of their social issues.

The objectives of the study were to provide:

- A background description of the phenomenon of CSEC, describing the underlying causes presented through a narrative description with any complementary tables that may help illustrate “push” and “pull” factors that force children into CSEC in Cameroon;
- An overview of the forms of child prostitution in Cameroon;
- An overview of the types of sexually exploited children and at risk children, e.g. street children, children in residential care institutions, child workers, etc.;
- An overview of the types of exploiters: both internal (Cameroon) and external (international, e.g. foreigners and tourists);
- Data on trends, nature and pattern of CSEC;
- Concrete proposals on how to eradicate CSEC in the country;
- Information on how the country is responding to the phenomenon of CSEC;
- Analysis on tools that seem to be most effective in combating CSEC; good-practice examples; and
- Information on institutional and non-governmental actors involved in addressing the problem (or any of its forms).

To attain these objectives, the following questions had to be addressed:

- Who are children?
- What are the root causes of this issue?
- How are these put into practice?
- Who is involved?
- What can be done to eliminate this phenomenon?

The methods used were semi-directive interviews, direct and indirect observation. The results obtained from the sample of 161 persons questioned (62 children, 47 parents, 21 exploiters and 31 resource persons) helped to underline key points:

- The study was carried out in 3 towns of Cameroon (Yaoundé, Bamenda, Bertua);
- The ages of the children varied between 10 and 18 years old, but the age group most represented varied between 16 and 18 years old;
- The distribution by sex reveals that a majority of those questioned were male: 49 boys against 13 girls;
- The questioned children come from all the provinces in Cameroon and 6 from outside the country;
- The very low educational levels in Cameroon account for why the majority of the questioned children have only a primary level education: 41 out of 62;

Only 11 have a secondary level education and 9 have never been to school.

Regarding the activities that children are involved in, it was found that many are truck pushers in the markets, car cleaners, vendors of little articles, plate cleaners at small restaurants in town; others, mostly girls, are domestic workers or are involved in prostitution to feed themselves or their families.

The working and living conditions of these children are deplorable. The most frequent sicknesses are scurvy, malaria, sickness linked to lack of proper treatment for worms, diarrhoea, amoeba due to poor alimentation, cough, headaches (mainly linked to drug use), tuberculosis and AIDS.

The study also reveals the absence of legal documents that seriously consider the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Current documentation highlights only the exploitation of children at work; the trafficking of children for economic aims has not yet been officially explained. This difficulty is explained by the complexity of conventions, notably Convention No.138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and also by the fact that these conventions do not necessarily take into account the local realities of underdeveloped countries. Actions on the fight against sexual exploitation of children exist apart and others are engaged either through governmental structures or civil society. The difficulties in implementing effective action are linked to the lack of human and financial resources. The will in itself is not sufficient; a mechanism to effectively fight CSEC needs to be put in place.

The study also shows that the root causes of CSEC are: wide poverty of families, the dissolution of family links, early marriages, lack of jobs, effects of the media, academic failures, research by employers of the informal sectors of vulnerable children, malleable and unconscious of their rights as well as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These different causes show that the links which exist between children, their families and society tend to lay more emphasis on the financial aspect. Such a consideration makes the child an object and an instrument at an age when he/she needs to be educated and trained in order to become a responsible person in the society. It should be noted that a form of moral, spiritual and structural poverty throws the child into a social tragedy, which makes his/her life a “poor chronicle”.

It is clear from this study that the commercial sexual exploitation of children does exist in Cameroon. It is a reality that shakes the practise and puts the evolution of the child and the stability of social order in danger. Contrary to the views of child protection professionals, the commercial sexual exploitation of children is not looked at in a negative light by most Cameroonian families because the children contribute to the well being of the family by bringing in money or by learning to take care of themselves.

All these analyses result in the proposal of actions that are summarised by taking into consideration the gravity of the CSEC situation. Some recommendations were retained, notably:

- Review the implication and the role of the State in the knowledge, diffusion and application of norms, in view of protecting child labour;

- Launch a systematic study on CSEC in Cameroon. The study should be carried out for a sufficient time in order to index the practices, have lengthy discussions with the children, contact the exploiters and parents to elicit the processes, the networks, family practises, the causes and consequences and finally to establish efficient fighting strategies, taking into account the cultural and the poverty situation of the family;
- The State must introduce serious sanctions for those who do not respect the rights of children;
- International organs should provide financial support to enable the State and civil society to search for solutions;
- Support and reinforce the capacities of social activists in their engagement of the social reforms in favour of children;
- Sensitise religious and traditional authorities to contribute in the advent of a new culture to respect the rights of children;
- Call for the mobilisation of families in the fight against the worst forms of child labour; and
- Work in favour of the protection and dignity of the child by respecting his/her rights.

Summarily, the question of the commercial sexual exploitation of children is inseparable from the vast programme on the fight against poverty. These issues are linked to the same inexplicable relationships between tradition and modernity. They are also linked to the insufficient consideration of family by the State. The State does not adequately take into consideration the human reality that is the family and its challenges.

It should be noted that the aim of this study was not only to arrive at a collective consciousness but also to show that African families are confronted today with mutations of structural, functional and relational order. These mutations are presented as progressive, destabilising factors of traditional usages towards uncertain horizons. What is pending is for the family to adapt to new, cultural and historical contexts as human and cultural institutions specialised in the accompaniment of education and training of children. All these disorders destabilise the children and push them to take part in undignified practices, which endanger their livelihoods and their physical and mental stability.

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## **2. DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE LAW**

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CONVENTION 138 Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, adopted on 26 June 1973.

CONVENTION 182 Concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour, adopted on 17 June 1999.

CONVENTION 29 Concerning Forced Labour, adopted on 28 June 1930.

## **ANNEXES**

### **LIST OF ASSOCIATIONS PROVING CARES TO CHILDREN**

#### **ASSEJA**

ASSEJA is a local NGO in Cameroon that works with child victims of trafficking and on child labour.

P.O. Box 5988 Yaoundé

Telephone: 220 92 93

Email: assejacmr@yahoo.fr

Association Camerounaise pour le développement intégral de l'enfant et de l'adolescent (ACDIA)

Telephone: 223 39 71

Centre Social EDIMAR

P.O. Box 185 Yaoundé

Telephone: 222 54 17.

Comité National pour les droits de l'enfant et de la femme

Commission Diocésaine Justice et paix Yaoundé

P.O. Box 1836 Yaoundé

Telephone: 221 04 83.

Cameroonian Red-Cross.

DEO (Defence of the Child International).

Fondation Fact (focuses primarily on adoption)

Fondation Petit Dan et Sara à Soa.

Foyer de l'Espérance.

P.O. Box 185 Yaoundé

Le centre des amis de la Technologie et d'initiation aux beaux-arts (CATIBA) located between the Omnisports stadium and the Bilingual High-School.

MINAS, located in the Handicap Centre of Etoug-Ebe

Organisation de développement d'étude, de formation et de conseils (ODECO)

P.O. Box 4263

Telephone: 223 39 84

Judicial Police Elig-Essono