



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

Distr.: General  
18 December 2013  
English  
Original: French

---

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**List of issues and questions in relation to the combined  
fourth and fifth periodic reports of Cameroon**

**Addendum**

**Cameroon's responses\***

---

\* In accordance with the information transmitted to States Parties regarding the processing of their reports, this document is being issued without formal editing.



**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACAFEJ	Cameroonian Association of Women Lawyers
AFD	French Development Agency
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALVF	Association to Combat Violence against Women
AME	Associations of Mothers and Children
ANC	Antenatal Consultation
APE	Association of Students' Parents
ARH	adolescent reproductive health
ARV	antiretrovirals
CAMNAFAW	Cameroon National Association For Family and Welfare
CAMSUCO	Cameroon Sugar Company
CARMMA	Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa
CCC	Communications to Change Behaviour
CERAC	Circle of Friends of Cameroon
CIPCRE	International Centre for the Promotion of Creation
CMA	District Medical Centre
CONAC	National Anti-Corruption Commission
CTA	Appropriate Technology Centre
DHS/MICS IV	4th Multi-Indicator Demographic and Health Survey
DLM	Disease Control Directorate
DOST	Directorate for Organization of Health Care and Technology
DPML	Department of Pharmacy, Medicine and Laboratories
DPS	Health Promotion Directorate
DRF	Financial Resources Directorate
DROS	Operational Research Division (Health)
DSF	Family Health Directorate
EPR	Education for Responsible Parenting
FGM	female genital mutilation
GIZ	German Technical Cooperation
GTT-SME	Maternal and Child Health Technical Working Group
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
HRD	Human Resources Directorate

IBD	Islamic Development Bank
ICTs	information and communications technologies
IEC	Information-Education-Communication
INADES Training	African Institute for Economics and Social Development
IRAD	Institute of Agricultural Research for Development
LB	live birth
MIDENO	Northwest Development Authority
MINADER	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINATD	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization
MINCOM	Ministry of Communication
MINCOMMERCE	Ministry of Trade
MINEDUB	Ministry of Basic Education
MINEPAT	Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development
MINESUP	Ministry of Higher Education
MINFI	Ministry of Finance
MINJEC	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education
MINJUSTICE	Ministry of Justice
MINMEE	Ministry of Water Resources and Energy
MINPROFF	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family
MINSANTE	Ministry of Public Health
MIRAP	Consumer Product Supply Regulatory Authority
NCHRF	National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms
NEMP	National Environmental Management Plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSP/RMNCH	National Strategic Plan for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
PACA	Agricultural Competitiveness Improvement Project
PADMIR	Rural Microfinance Development Support Project
PAFICIT	Support for Women in Informal Trans-border Trade
PAFN	National Forestry Action Plan
PARETFOP	Technical Education and Vocational Training Reform Support Project
PCRD	Decentralized Rural Credit Project

PDA/CPF	Proposed establishment of a support system for poor women at Centres for the Advancement of Women
PDFC	Mushroom Cultivation Development Project
PMTCT	Prevention of mother-to-child transmission
PNDP	National Community-Driven Development Programme
PNDRT	National Roots and Tubers Development Programme
PNG	National Gender Policy
PNSSA	National Food Security Programme
PNVRA	National Agricultural Extension and Research Programme
RBM	results-based management
RENATA	National Network of Associations of Aunties
SDGE	Strategy Document for Growth and Employment
SEMRY	Rice Expansion and Modernization Company of Yagoua
SIDA	Swedish Agency for International Cooperation
SOCAPALM	Cameroon Oil Palm Company
SODECOTON	Cotton Development Company
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WAHA	Women and Health Association
WB	World Bank
WHDA	Women-Health-Development in Africa
WHO	World Health Organization
ZEP	Education Priority Zone

The Government of Cameroon, after reviewing the comments and points of concern raised by CEDAW through the Pre-session Working Committee, provides some answers below with respect to the issues raised following the examination on the merits of the combined 4th and 5th Reports of Cameroon under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

### **Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework**

The report states that the Criminal Code, the Civil Code and the Family Code are being revised (paragraphs 41-43 and 46). Please indicate the content of the proposed amendment as regards women's rights, and specify the exact time of its adoption.

Please also supply information on the provisions of customary law that may infringe women's human rights and any measures being taken to mitigate such infringements.

#### **Response of the Government of Cameroon**

1-a. The amendments relating to women's rights contained in the draft Criminal Code, the Civil Code and/or the Code of Persons and the Family aim to eliminate discrimination, to better protect the rights of women and to punish violations thereof. Thus:

- the minimum age for marriage will be the same for bride and groom alike (18);
- the husband will no longer have the exclusive right to administer the couple's common property;
- female genital mutilation will be banned;
- sexual harassment will be more severely punished;
- the definition of adultery will be identical for the wife and the husband;
- "ironing" of breasts will be criminalized, as hindering the development of an organ;
- all obstacles to the right to education and training, freedom to work, and the exercise of rights of succession will be eliminated;
- a rapist's marriage to the rape victim will no longer have the effect of an amnesty.

1-b. Customary law is not codified, as there are as many bodies of customary law as there are ethnic groups or tribes in Cameroon. Customs invoked before traditional courts may not be contrary to law or morality or public order. Hence, judgements handed down at customary courts by "judges" who are not magistrates are subject to ratification by the Court of Appeal. It follows that, when a custom invoked by a party to the proceedings infringes women's human rights, the court must set it aside in favour of written law.

## **Access to justice**

2. The difficulties encountered by women in obtaining justice are of several different kinds:

### **(a) Economic constraints**

Women are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups in Cameroon. Even though justice is by law free of charge, in the sense that no fees may be charged for services rendered, court proceedings require the payment of related costs. Act No. 2009/004 of 14 April 2009 on legal aid is one of the measures taken by the Government to encourage poor women to take legal action. However, despite the enthusiasm observed during the first year of implementation of the law, women are now less often asking for legal aid from the commissions established for that purpose at the courts. Moreover, it appears from the data gathered from the various jurisdictions that in 2012, 34 women received legal aid, whereas in 2011 there had been 62 and in 2010, the first year of application of the law, 141.

Of 154 applications reviewed, 117 (78.97%) were approved. Applications for legal aid were also down from the previous year. A review of the changes between 2011 and 2012 shows the following results:

Among the reasons for this decline given to jurisdictions by the chairpersons of legal aid commissions is the poor level of information available to the target populations.

To remedy that, the government plans to conduct outreach and awareness campaigns targeting the affected communities.

### **(b) Sociocultural constraints**

Women are not yet in the habit of advocating for rights owing to the patriarchal organization of society. They tend to be fatalistic and hesitate to take legal action to assert rights that have been violated, often out of fear of reprisals in their communities.

As corrective measures, awareness actions (workshops, seminars, educational sessions, roundtables, legal clinics and radio and television broadcasts...) are being undertaken by various stakeholders to make women aware of their rights and how to assert them. Moreover, communications media dealing with topics related to basic social rights are being disseminated.

Similarly, special days for girls and women are suitable forums to intensify advocacy actions.

As was noted in response to question No. 1 above, customary law is applied only in areas where legislation does not exist. It should be noted that traditional courts only have jurisdiction where all parties to the trial agree. Thus, at the first hearing, a defendant who does not wish to be tried under customary law may so advise the court before any debate on the merits is held. The magistrate may not override that objection and must rule that the court does not have jurisdiction.

## **National mechanism for the advancement of women**

The report refers to the development of the National Gender Policy (paragraph 54). Please advise us of the content of that report, and indicate what actions were taken to accelerate development of the policy and when it is expected to be adopted and implemented. Please also describe the arrangements for coordination, follow-up and evaluation of its implementation.

### **Response of the Government of Cameroon**

#### **National Gender Policy**

The gender policy document of the Republic of Cameroon is a reference and orientation framework for the Government's actions to promote and integrate gender equality in all development sectors.

It was developed through a participatory approach involving up-to-date sectoral data, and may be adopted at any moment once the technical stages have been completed.

The policy contains four main parts, that is: the general context, a situational analysis of gender issues in Cameroon, policy elements, the institutional framework and the mechanism for implementation, follow-up and evaluation.

The situational analysis of gender issues involves a diagnosis of the major problems faced by the women of Cameroon in all sectors of activity, as listed in the table below.

Each element of the Gender Policy is mapped to the management approach for the problems referred to.

#### **Foundations of the Gender Policy**

The Gender Policy is based on Cameroon's international, regional and subregional commitments to gender equality and protection of women's rights.

**At the international level**, the Gender Policy is predicated on legal instruments ratified by Cameroon (treaties and conventions on fundamental human rights and gender equality) and on the resolutions and recommendations adopted at international conferences.

**At the regional level**, the relevant instruments are, in particular: the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as it relates to women's rights, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women, the Declaration of Heads of State of the African Union on equality between women and men, and the African Union's gender policy.

**At the national level**, the gender policy is based on the Constitution, the speeches of the Head of State, the basic text of MINPROFF, and the guidelines contained in such framework documents as Vision 2035 and the Strategy Document for Growth and Employment (SDGE).

### **3-a: Content**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Gender Policy is to promote a fair and equitable society for men and women in order to ensure sustainable development.

#### **Objectives**

##### **General objective**

The general objective of the National Gender Policy is to contribute to the systematic elimination of inequalities between women and men at all levels of social life.

##### **Specific objectives**

The following specific objectives will contribute to the achievement of the general objective:

- To promote equitable access for girls and boys, men and women, to education, training and information;
- To promote better access for women to quality health care, in particular with regard to reproductive health;
- To take measures to remove inequalities between men and women in access to economic opportunities and employment;
- To promote a sociocultural environment conducive to the personal development of women and respect for their rights;
- To ensure better representation of women in public life and decision-making;
- To expedite the implementation and internalization of legal instruments pertaining to the rights of women and girls;
- To enhance the powers of the national institutional mechanism for the promotion of women's rights.

##### **Strategic thrusts of the Gender Policy**

The objectives of the Gender Policy are to resolve the major problems identified within the various sectors. Seven (7) strategic thrusts have been identified on the basis of those problems and are broken down into objectives and action strategies recorded in a matrix:

##### **Strategic objectives:**

- 1. Strategic thrust 1:** To promote equitable access for girls and boys, women and men, to education, training and information:
  - To improve the perception of education and schooling for girls within families and communities, in particular in the ZEPs and in the countryside;
  - To reinforce actions aimed at the elimination of the gap between girls and boys in the formal and informal education systems;

- To reduce the dropout rate among girls;
- To reduce women's illiteracy rates from 35 to 10%;
- To promote girls' and women's access to ITCs and vocational training.

**Strategic thrust 2:** To promote better access for women to health care, in particular with regard to reproductive health. Strategic objectives:

- To reduce the rate of maternal and child mortality by at least 50%;
- To reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS among women to a residual level (1%);
- To provide comprehensive care for pregnant women and girls who are infected;
- To provide women and girls with nutritional and health education;
- To reduce the rate of maternal mortality due to malaria by a third;
- To improve the use of contraceptives among women of childbearing age by 10%;
- To involve men and boys in the community's response to issues of reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and STIs.

**Strategic thrust 3:** To promote equal opportunity between men and women in economic opportunities and employment; Strategic objectives:

- To reduce the incidence of poverty among women from 40.2 to 28.7%;
- To facilitate equitable access to the means of production for men and women;
- To develop measures to facilitate equitable control of the means of production by men and women;
- To reduce inequalities between men and women in employment and vocational training;
- To enhance women's entrepreneurial capacity;
- To improve women's access to support, subsidies and economic opportunity.

**Strategic thrust 4:** To promote a sociocultural environment conducive to respect for women's rights.

**Strategic thrust 5:** To enhance women's participation and representation in public life and decision-making.

**Strategic thrust 6:** To enhance the institutional framework for gender advocacy.

**Strategic thrust 7:** To improve national legislation on the promotion and protection of women's rights.

### **3-b Actions undertaken**

#### **Measures taken to accelerate development of the Gender Policy**

A multisectoral action plan is being finalized that will serve as a way of giving practical effect to the strategic orientations contained in the policy document. In view of the complexity and technicality of the document, the cost of its production,

and the fact that it sets out the actions to be taken sector by sector to give effect to the strategic forecasts, the Government has opted for a gradual approach whereby sectoral plans will be developed for four sectors, each of which corresponds to one strategic focus. Thus, the five (5) plans below have been drawn up:

- law and legislation (to improve national legislation on the promotion and protection of women's rights);
- enhancement of women's participation and representation in public life and decision-making;
- promotion of equitable access for men and women, girls and boys, to education, training and information;
- promotion of equal opportunity between men and women in economic opportunities and employment;
- strengthening of institutional frameworks for the advancement of women;
- better access for women to health care, in particular with regard to reproductive health;
- promotion of a sociocultural environment conducive to respect for women's rights.

At the conclusion of the process, during fiscal 2014, the seven (7) action plans will be gathered into a single document constituting a multisectoral action plan.

In the meantime, following a cabinet meeting held on 23 April 2013, the Prime Minister and Head of Government issued guidelines to the Government on the implementation of the first operational frameworks and called for a midterm review of the actions taken in connection with the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform.

Finally, implementation of the monitoring arrangements is under way with the creation of an advisory committee to monitor gender issues, reporting to the Prime Minister and Head of Government's office (decree No. 2012/638 of 21 December 2012 establishing the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family).

### **3-c Coordination**

Under the institutional arrangements for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Gender Policy, an interministerial committee, a technical committee and a technical secretariat are being established.

#### **Interministerial Committee**

The Interministerial Committee is responsible for directing implementation of the Gender Policy. The Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister and Head of Government, is made up of representatives of all ministries. Its proceedings are governed by bylaws drawn up by its chairperson.

#### **Technical Committee**

The Technical Committee is mandated to support the ministry in charge of women's empowerment and gender issues in implementing the Gender Policy. It shall therefore:

- facilitate communications between the various stakeholders involved in implementing the National Gender Policy by holding quarterly meetings;
- help MINPROFF draw up documents for the Steering Committee;
- help find and mobilize internal and external financial resources and establish databases on the various issues pertinent to the Gender Policy;
- take part in Gender Policy monitoring and evaluation missions;
- enforce the guidelines of the Interministerial Committee;

The Technical Committee is chaired by the Minister responsible for the Advancement of Women. Its proceedings are governed by bylaws drawn up by the chairperson of the Interministerial Committee.

The Technical Committee will be supported in the field by regional, departmental and local commissions made up, like the Technical Committee, of representatives of the decentralized offices of the sectoral ministerial departments, decentralized local communities, and civil society.

#### **Technical Secretariat**

The Technical Secretariat, chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, shall:

- provide technical coordination for the actions taken to implement the Gender Policy;
- coordinate technical matters with all those involved in implementing the Gender Policy;
- prepare files on resource mobilization for the financing of Gender Policy programmes;
- prepare follow-up reports on the implementation of the Gender Policy;
- have a database prepared containing the results of the implementation of the Gender Policy;
- make technical proposals to ensure the efficient and effective execution of the multisectoral action plan to implement the Gender Policy;
- form relationships with development partners to mobilize the necessary resources for implementation of the Gender Policy in cooperation with the authorities concerned;
- prepare files for the Interministerial Committee;
- provide secretarial services for the Interministerial Committee.

The Government will establish a mechanism to monitor activities in such a way as to ensure the continuous evaluation necessary for the improvement of the plans and programmes developed on the basis of the strategies of the Gender Policy at the national, regional and sectoral levels. Monitoring and evaluation will also help strengthen and enhance the capacity to manage and administer all institutions involved in the implementation of the defined plans and programmes.

An overall evaluation will be done to gauge results on the basis of general and sector-specific objectives. The evaluation will cover a given period and field and will have precise objectives so that programmes underway may be quickly evaluated and any necessary changes made. Small-scale surveys will be done regularly as one of the best ways of carrying out that evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation actions will be taken at regular intervals as set by the Technical Committee. Monitoring and evaluation of this policy will be governed by the principles of results-based management (RBM) and the human-rights-based programming approach.

In order for the bodies so defined to begin their work, the following monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are proposed:

- collaboration protocols between the national mechanism and the other partners;
- an information system for gender issues at the national level;
- monitoring and evaluation reports on implementation of the National Gender Policy, produced by the stakeholders;
- an annual status report to be submitted to the Prime Minister and Head of Government;
- theme papers on gender issues in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life, in support of advocacy for the creation of an institutional environment conducive to the promotion of gender issues and their mainstreaming into development;
- periodic reviews, follow-up missions, monitoring and audits.

## **Stereotypes and harmful practices**

Please indicate the concrete measures that have been taken or are planned to improve socio-cultural behaviours and eliminate stereotypes and harmful practices based on gender, such as early marriage, female genital mutilation and breast ironing.

### **Response of the Government of Cameroon**

#### **Concrete legal actions taken**

- Punishment for the perpetrators of forced or early marriage under article 356 of the Penal Code:

*“(1) Whoever compels anyone to marry shall be punished with imprisonment for from five to ten years and with a fine of from 25,000 to 1,000,000 francs.*

*(2) Where the victim is under the age of 18, the punishment may not be less than two years’ imprisonment, whatever the mitigating circumstances.*

*(3) Whoever gives in marriage a boy under 16 years of age or a girl under 14 shall be punished as under the two last foregoing subsections.*

(4) *Upon conviction, the court may deprive the offender of parental power and disqualify him from being the guardian or curator of any person for the period stipulated in article 31(4) of this Code.*

- Punishment of the perpetrators of female genital mutilation under articles 277 and 350 of the Penal Code dealing with bodily harm:

**Article 277: Serious injury**

*“Whoever permanently deprives another person, in whole or in part, of the use of a member, an organ or a sense shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of ten (10) to twenty (20) years.”*

**Article 350: Violence against children**

*“(1) When the victim of the offences referred to in Articles 275, 277 and 278 of this Code is a minor under the age of 15, the penalties are death and life imprisonment ...”.*

To better deal with such cases, however, the wording of article 277 was revised during the updating of the Penal Code: two paragraphs were inserted which call for stiffer penalties, up to imprisonment for life, where the serious injury consists of a mutilation of the genitals and where the mutilation resulted in the death of the victim or where the perpetrator habitually engages in that practice. In all such cases, accessory forfeitures and penalties may be handed down against the offender, such as closure or confiscation of his or her establishment or publication of the judgment. Further, “ironing” of breasts is criminalized as “hindering the development of an organ”.

It should be added that the kidnapping of children, regardless of sex, is punishable under three articles of the Penal Code:

One article makes simple kidnapping without fraud or violence punishable by a term of imprisonment of 5 to 10 years together with a fine of 0 to 200,000 CFA francs.

A second article makes kidnapping complicated by fraud or violence punishable by a term of imprisonment of 5 to 10 years together with a fine of 0 to 400,000 CFA francs.

A third article increases the penalties called for in the other two. Thus, kidnappers risk life in prison if the child is less than [ ] years of age or if they sought or have obtained a ransom. They are subject to the death penalty if the kidnapping results in the victim’s death.

In the particular case of the phenomenon of kidnapping and murder of young girls “to sell their organs or for magical/religious purposes” that was observed in Cameroon hearing 2013, the Government has taken preventive and repressive measures.

In terms of prevention, police units have been detached to areas where such attacks on girls have taken place, and patrols have been organized.

In terms of repression, the investigation has resulted in the arrest of 10 suspects. On 11 March, they were formally charged with conspiracy to commit murder; aggravated rape with coercion; attempted murder; and conspiracy and

coercion in offering an indignity to a dead body; and were remanded to the Central Prison in Yaoundé. The judicial investigation is ongoing.

### **Concrete social measures taken**

#### **Early and forced marriages**

In addition to repressive measures, it should be noted that the effort to eliminate early and forced marriages is part of the Government's overall endeavour to ensure respect for women's rights in society. That endeavour includes awareness, advocacy, victim support and legislative reform. The measures are being taken both by public authorities and civil society organizations. Their purpose is to bring about a change in behaviour within communities and families and to reform traditions.

#### **Violence against women**

The State Party is making every effort to eradicate violence against women. The measures taken reflect the political will of the Head of State, who considers such violence a societal scourge for which, he insists, an urgent solution must be found. Actions are now underway to achieve that. These include:

- the ongoing organization of a national survey of violence against women, containing questions regarding early and forced marriages that will supply additional information on how prevalent such practices are in Cameroon;
- the organization of awareness and education sessions for families and community leaders and/or volunteers countrywide. In 2012 and 2013, more than 3 million persons were reached by these campaigns, which are part of the MINPROFF roadmap;
- development of a national strategy to combat violence against women, which was distributed to all social and institutional stakeholders through awareness and social mobilization sessions; community radio relayed the information in local languages to ensure a broad grasp within society of the programme's goals;
- the national launch of the world campaign to combat violence against women initiated in 2008 by the United Nations Secretary-General. The campaign embodies specific messages on the repression of violence against women. It took place under the august patronage of the Head of State;
- better collaboration with several civil society organizations through the approval of a joint action platform to combat violence against women and girls (International Centre for the Promotion of Creation (CIPCRE), Lawyers Without Borders, Cameroonian Association of Women Lawyers (ACAFEJ) Association to Combat Violence against Women (ALVF), supported by UN Women and the Embassy of France. A similar cooperation arrangement has been signed with the Cameroon Council of Imams and Muslim Dignitaries to help stop female genital mutilation;
- establishment of governmental and nongovernmental structures to support women victims of violence. Such support consists in listening, victim counselling, and medical and psychological assistance. At the government level, we should mention: MINPROFF, MINAS and NCHRF.

Nongovernmental support includes: CAMNAFAW, ALVF, ACAFEJ, RENATA Trauma Centre;

- the planned implementation of a specialized one-stop centre with the support of UN Women. Technical studies are under way, based on a literature review and on discussions with key stakeholders and with victims. They will be supplemented by consultation with such countries as Morocco, which is making progress in this field. Among the first results of this research have been project guidelines, in particular on the compatibility between missions of the structure to be implemented formal legal/institutional framework, and regional, international and national programmes to protect women's human rights. The research also shows that the structure to be created will be useful in forging sustainable solutions for victims' problems.
- Further, departmental delegations of social affairs, police stations, certain sub-prefectures, social centres and NGOs (CAMNAFAW, ALVF, ACAFEJ, Cameroon Trauma Centre, CIPCRE, RENATA, etc.) have services which, among other things, provide listening, counselling and psychosocial support for the victims of gender-based violence.
- There are also comprehensive care platforms for victims of gender-based violence. Their purpose is to provide direct aid to victims, to enhance stakeholders' capacity (community volunteers and other partners) and to intensify prevention by means of IEC, CCC and advocacy activities. One such platform was established under the project "Promoting an Integrated Response to and Prevention of VAW through a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Mechanism", which has been supported by UN Women and enjoys the cooperation of MINPROFF, MINSANTE, ACAFEJ, RENATA, ALVF, FESADE and NCHRF.

Another platform brings together the NGOs ASF, CIPCRE, ALVF and ACAFEJ and NGOs in the "Project to Combat Violence against Women in Cameroon", financed by the Embassy of France in Cameroon within the decentralized services of MINPROFF and UN.

- Services have been opened that are at the same time centres for reporting violence against women. Information from these response units around the country facilitates the activities of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family in support of victims.
- Campaigns have been organized to promote girls' education. In that context, Cameroon has organized a second edition of the International Day of the Girl established in 2012 by the United Nations. The theme of the event was "innovation for girls' education". Among the associated activities was a prize-giving to reward the most deserving female matriculants for 2012 in scientific and technical areas as well as those from poor families. In addition, an awareness caravan was organized with the participation of the Ministry of Basic Education, students and development partners (specifically Plan Cameroon) through the campaign "Because I'm a Girl."
- A shelter and support centre for women victims of violence was established in the Yaoundé V district. The Centre's operations are ramping up progressively in terms of equipment and assignment of qualified resources.

As regards the criminal law, it should be noted that Cameroon has chosen to repress violence against women through the Penal Code. Thus, with the goal of internalizing CEDAW, some provisions of the current enactment that discriminated against women have been eliminated from the bill to establish a new Penal Code, whereas new offences have been defined for certain forms of violence.

For example:

- the definition of the characteristic elements of the crime of adultery in the current Penal Code article discriminates against women; it reads as follows: “A married woman who has sexual relations with someone other than her husband is liable to a term of imprisonment of 2 to 6 months or a fine of [ ] to [ ] francs. The same penalties shall apply to a husband who has sexual relations with other women in the conjugal home or, outside the conjugal home, habitually has relations with another woman.” That inequality will be corrected with the adoption of the new Penal Code.

The final wording of that article is as follows: “A married woman who has sexual relations with someone other than her husband is liable to a term of imprisonment of 2 to 6 months or a fine of twenty-five thousand (25,000) to one hundred thousand (100,000) francs.

(2) The penalties provided in the paragraph above **shall also apply to a husband who has sexual relations with other women than his wife or wives.**”

- Sexual harassment becomes a crime.
- The subsequent marriage of the rapist with the rape victim no longer has the effect of an amnesty. The reworded Penal Code article on sexual offences, below, no longer enables the rapist to escape prosecution by marrying the victim.

### **Sexual offences**

#### **Article 295: Private indecency**

(1) Whoever commits an indecent act in the presence of a non-consenting person of either sex, even in private, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of fifteen days to two years and/or a fine of 10,000 to 100,000 francs.

(2) The penalties provided for in the paragraph above are doubled if the indecent act is accompanied by violence.

#### **Article 296: Rape**

Whoever by force or moral ascendancy compels any female, whether above or below the age of puberty, to have sexual intercourse with him shall be punished with imprisonment for from five to ten years.

#### **Article 297: Subsequent marriage**

**The voluntary marriage of the pubescent victim with the perpetrator of the acts referred to in the articles above shall have no effect on prosecution and conviction.**

It should be specified that family violence, including conjugal rape, is also punishable where it is reported by the victim under the general provisions of the Penal Code on bodily harm; for violence of whatever kind that has caused death or a partial or permanent incapacity to work (articles 275–281) is punishable under the Penal Code, while rape is punishable regardless of the identity of the perpetrator (cf. Article 296 above).

### **Trafficking and living off the avails of prostitution**

Trafficking in and smuggling persons, including women, is specifically outlawed under Act No. 2011/024 of 14 December 2011 against trafficking in and smuggling of persons.

The new law supplements the Penal Code now in effect, which already outlaws, in articles [ ] and [ ], forced labour, slavery, bonded labour and procuring, while article [ ] increases the penalties when the victims of slavery or bonded labour are persons under the age of [ ]. In addition, articles [ ] and [ ] outlaw the abduction of minors, whose victims are more often girls than boys.

The Act of 14 December 2011 superseded Act No. 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 against child trafficking, expanding its wording to produce a more general enactment against every kind of inhuman and degrading treatment of human beings, regardless of their age and sex.

The Act begins by defining the concepts of person, smuggling of persons, trafficking in persons, and exploitation and bonding of persons, then sets out the offences under those headings and the corresponding penalties.

The Act defines “person” as: a human being of either sex, regardless of age;

- **Smuggling of persons:** moving a person or having a person moved, within Cameroon or abroad, seeking directly or indirectly to gain a material benefit, whatever its nature;
- **Trafficking in persons:** means the recruitment, transfer, harbouring or accommodation of persons for purposes of exploitation, whether by threats, use of force, kidnapping, fraud, deception or abuse of authority or by taking advantage of a position of vulnerability or by offering or accepting benefits to obtain the consent of a person having authority over the victim;
- **Exploitation of persons:** includes, at minimum, the exploitation or procuring of persons or any other form of sexual exploitation, exploitation of their labour or forced labour, slavery and like practices, debt bondage or removal of organs.

Given this special Act, the article of the Penal Code that calls for the same penalties, [ ] to [ ] years’ imprisonment for the crime of human trafficking, is superseded. Under that article, however, the following case law was recorded:

In the case of the State vs Gashu Mankah Angelina, sentenced on 26 October to [ ] years’ imprisonment by the Mezam county court at Bamenda for trafficking two women from Nigeria.

Prostitution remains an offence under the Penal Code in both of its aspects:

- the exploitation of the prostitution of women is outlawed by the article on the criminalization of procuring. That article's provisions call for brothels to be closed by the magistrate. Moreover, minor girls enjoy special protection from the moral danger of prostitution under Article [ ], which makes it an offence to cause a child under 18 years of age to live or work in a house or establishment where prostitution takes place;
- inasmuch as prostitution is a sex trade carried on by women, it is outlawed under article [ ], which provides the same penalties for persons who "habitually perform sexual acts with others for pay" and those who solicit for prostitution by whatever means. As a preventive measure and to maintain public order, the administrative authorities very frequently close bawdy houses. Supported by the police vice squad, they carry out mass arrests of streetwalkers.

It should be noted that the victims of prostitution, that is, of procurers or exploiters, are not criminalized.

To focus more attention to the fight against trafficking in persons within the broad meaning of the Act of 14 December 2011 referred to above, the institutional framework has been strengthened through:

- the establishment, on 17 September 2010, of the Network against Trafficking in and Exploitation of Children (RENALTTE)<sup>1</sup> to engage in prevention by organizing awareness campaigns with the various partners (religious communities, employers' councils and trade unions in civil society), identifying and removing children from the channels of exploitation, and taking action against the scourge of trafficking as a whole;
- establishment of a coordinating body, namely the Interministerial Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons, established by Decree No. 163/CAB/PM of 2 November 2010 and chaired by the Secretary-General of the Prime Minister's Office.

That Committee shall:

- have the policy against trafficking in persons implemented by all Government services;
- initiate and oversee training;
- see to it that international instruments to which Cameroon is a party and which relate to trafficking in persons are embodied in domestic law;
- stimulate debate on the issue.

It has developed a governmental action plan on human trafficking. Under that plan, five main thrusts have been defined: stepped-up efforts to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of human trafficking, skills upgrading for law enforcement personnel and social workers, adoption of legislation on trafficking in adults,

---

<sup>1</sup> RENALTTE is an organization made up of representatives of the Government (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Social Affairs, General Delegation for National Security, National Gendarmerie), the social partners (trade unions), and civil society (NGOs, associations, traditional chiefs, religious leaders).

training of law enforcement personnel in the use of electronic databases as an anti-trafficking tool, investigations into allegations of abuse arising from practices of hereditary debt-bondage in the northern parts of the country.

To implement the action plan, training workshops are being organized by the Government, in cooperation with the American NGO Vital Voices, for social workers, judges and law enforcement personnel.

In order to elucidate kidnapping cases, police investigations are being undertaken and the suspects brought before the courts, as in the case of a baby taken from a maternity ward in Yaoundé in August 2011.

When Vanessa Tchatchou reported that her newborn baby had disappeared from the maternity ward of the gynaecological/obstetrical and paediatric hospital in Yaoundé, suspects were arrested following an investigation. They were then arraigned in criminal court to answer charges of conspiracy and complicity in the kidnapping of a minor resulting in death. In Judgment No. 473 of [ ] October, one of the accused was acquitted on the grounds that he had had no criminal intent. The others were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment of 20 to 25 years under the provisions of Articles 96, 97, 353 and 354 of the Penal Code.

#### **Participation in decision-making and international representation**

To increase the number of women elected to public office and ensure their equality in political life, the Electoral Code, which was enacted by Act No. 2012/001 of 19 April 2012, requires political parties to consider gender in preparing their electoral lists for the election of members of the National Assembly, municipal counsellors and senators. Subsequently, in June 2012, Cameroon adopted a strategic gender and elections plan. The plan, which forms part of the strategy document for growth and employment, temporarily sets the electoral quota for women at 30%. In 2013, the leader of the political party in power with a national power base (the President of the Republic) made a decision imposing 30% representation of women in electoral lists presented by his party. Other political parties followed suit. One of the results of these provisions has been an increase in the number of female members of the National Assembly from 25 (13.8%) to 56 (31.11%) between the eighth and ninth parliamentary sessions.

As regards women's representation in decision-making positions, the 2020 strategy document for growth and employment sets a 30% target for the participation of women in the public service.

Below is an illustration of how these measures will be implemented in the area of justice:

On the occasion of the appointment of judges on 18th of April 2012, two women, of a possible total of six, were promoted to director positions, to wit, the Director of General Affairs and the Director of Human Rights and International Cooperation. The second woman to become President of a Court of Appeals, out of a possible total of 10, has been appointed. She is the President of the southern district Court of Appeals in Ebolowa. In general, there has been a shift in judgeships toward male/female parity or at least toward achievement of the quota of so many women set by the SDGE.

## Education

Please inform us of the measures taken and envisaged: (a) to increase the enrolment of girls and eliminate regional disparities in that regard; (b) to reduce the dropout rate among girls; (c) to eliminate economic, social and cultural obstacles and girls' education, in particular direct or indirect tuition costs and early marriages or pregnancies; (d) to eliminate sexual violence and harassment of girls in schools; and (e) to eliminate stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of men and women in school books, curricula and teacher training programmes.

### Response of the Government of Cameroon

The government of Cameroon has made commitments at the national and international level alike to providing quality education to all children. That commitment takes the shape of a number of practical actions and proactive measures. Promotion of girls' education is part of that trend, in view of the difficulties they face both in starting school and in staying in school. Hence, school enrolments remain low in all four regions of Cameroon: Adamawa, 73.1% for girls as opposed to 98.1% for boys, making for a parity index of 0.75 by sex; Far North, 68.2% for girls compared to 101.1% for boys, or an index of 0.67; North, 69.9% for girls compared to 103.6% for boys, or an index of 0.67; East, 76.9% for girls compared to 91.1% for boys, or an index of 0.84. School leaving rates vary in a similar manner in the regions, from 38% to 51% for girls and 60% to 78% for boys—rates that are rather low compared to the national average of 79.7% for girls as opposed to 93.9% for boys, making for a parity index of 0.85% by sex. Those regions have been declared Priority Education Zones so that the Government and its partners can take specific action there to increase girls' enrolment.

#### (a) Increase the enrolment of girls and eliminate regional disparities in that regard

The Government is aware of the situation and is pursuing a number of actions through the ministries in charge of education to promote girls' education nationwide. These include:

- Establishment of the UNICEF/Cameroon Cooperation Programme, rescaled in the area of basic education in the Priority Education Zones (ZEPs);
- The official launch in 2011 of the Cameroon version of UNGEI, to promote the education of Cameroonian girls;
- Establishment of Community Pre-School Centres to provide communities with the possibility of educating children in an informal school system. The goal is to promote enrolment of children in the countryside and among poor families. As a side benefit, it allows girls who must stay home to look after the younger children to go to school;
- Publication of mathematics and initial reading textbooks in the Baka language in order to encourage boys, and particularly girls, of the pygmy groups of eastern Cameroon to go to school;
- Granting of scholarships to the most deserving girls in technical education. That activity is being underwritten by the Technical Education and Vocational Training Reform Support Project (PARETFOP). As a result, an average of 100 girls have been receiving scholarships each year since the 2007/2008 school

year. In 2012, 1740 deserving students received textbooks, including 580 girls in scientific and technological programmes at Cameroonian secondary schools;

- Granting support to girl students enrolled in science and technology programmes at institutions of higher learning;
- A larger body of primary-level teachers: 13,185 in 2007, 5,120 in 2008, 5,159 in 2009, 6,275 in 2010 and 7,451 in 2011.

Those measures have helped increase preschool enrolment by 1.9%. Similarly, the percentage of girls in primary education has risen to 46%.

In higher education, there is a tendency for the gap between men and women to narrow over the years. The difference in percentage representation fell from 22 to 16 percentage points between 2001 and 2011. The inequality has already been reversed in faculties of arts and letters and social sciences, while parity is closer to being achieved in faculties of law and political science and in biomedical faculties. Women's representation rose to 49.5% in 2011, whereas it had been only 44% in 2001.

**(b) Measures taken to reduce the school dropout rate among girls**

A number of measures have been taken:

- grants of aid and scholarships to Cameroonian students from within the country and abroad, including girls. That assistance can vary from 75,000 to 150,000 francs;
- with the support of the World Food Programme, the government of Cameroon is supplying food rations to young girls in the ZEPs to allow them to stay in school at least until the end of their primary education;
- organization of capacity building workshops for partners in girls' education platform, to encourage them to reflect on the current situation and the challenges facing girls' education;
- introduction of the Big Sister concept in the ZEPs, through Parents' Associations, to build solidarity among girls. Under that formula, older girls help the younger ones and help them to overcome their difficulties at school;
- building awareness among parents and community volunteers of the importance of girls' education through Associations of Mothers and Children (AMEs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs);
- from 2006 to 2011, organization by young people, with UNICEF support, of four motorized awareness caravans in the ZEPs (Garoua, Maroua, Ngaoundéré, Bertoua) with communications media (banners, flyers) to disseminate messages encouraging families to keep girls in school.
- Since 2009, with the support of Plan Cameroon, the Government has been developing the project "Learning without Fear", which consists in creating a friendly environment for students and teachers in ten regions of Cameroon. Another project objective is to keep girls in school.

**(c) Measures taken to eliminate economic, social and cultural obstacles and girls' education, in particular direct or indirect tuition costs and early marriages or pregnancies.**

A number of actions are being taken to eliminate the disparities observed:

- - construction of separate school latrines suitable for girls;
- - UNESCO-supported training of teachers and students in educational tools dealing with family life and HIV/AIDS, with peer educators among the students;
- - At the teaching level, the Citizenship and Morals Education programme covers the following topics: behaviours that violate the dignity of the human person, such as rape; sexuality; discrimination against women; sexism; and social advancement of women.
- - the policy of the Government of Cameroon is to take the gender dimension into account at the level of higher education;
- - a gender-aware policy is in effect for the allocation of rooms in student dormitories and in the selection of young people for the various student support programmes, such as the work-study programme, scholarships, holiday internships, and official competitions.

**(d) Measures taken to eliminate sexual violence and harassment of girls in schools.**

To eliminate violence and sexual harassment of girls in schools and universities, the Cameroonian Government has enacted laws to protect children in general and girls in particular; for instance, Act No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 on the Orientation of Education in Cameroon.

Other actions are being taken:

- organization of awareness and anti-sexual-harassment campaigns in schools and universities (publication of books, organization of conferences...);
- imposition of sanctions against teachers convicted of sexual harassment by the Minister of Higher Education;
- signature of an agreement between CONAC and MINESUP to achieve swift and positive results from the fight against corruption, including sexual harassment;
- The anti-corruption unit of the Ministry of Higher Education
- lists among corrupt acts both sexual harassment and overly generous marking of female students.

**(e) Measures taken to eliminate stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of men and women in school books, curricula and teacher training programmes.**

In order to eliminate stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of men and women in school books, curricula and teacher training programmes:

- a commission meets annually to select textbooks that comply with the clause of the gender policy regarding stereotypes. (cf. the distribution to 2,000 girls

in Cameroon's Northern Region of minimal textbook bundles containing the essential books for their education);

- the Ministry of Higher Education takes gender equality into account in promotions to positions of responsibility both within core services and at universities.

### **Employment**

The report indicates that an interministerial commission for the revision of the Labour Code is currently hard at work (paragraph 151).

Please inform us of the measures taken and envisaged: (a) to repeal the discriminatory provisions of Decree 81-02 of 1981 that allow a man to oppose his wife's practice of a profession; (b) to adopt legal provisions to cover all circumstances of sexual harassment; (c) to expedite the reform extending social security to women working in the informal sector; and (d) to increase women's access to microcredit.

Please tell us about the measures taken to resolve cases of (a) labour exploitation and hazardous working conditions faced by women and girls on cocoa plantations; (b) labour exploitation, violence and deprivation of freedoms suffered by women and domestic workers; and (c) the exploitation of girls in foster families.

### **Response of the Government of Cameroon**

- (a) to repeal the discriminatory provisions of Decree 81-02 of 1981 that allow a man to oppose his wife's practice of a profession;**

It is actually Article 74 of Order No. 81-02 of 29 June 1981 on the organization of civil status, not the decree referred to in question 12, that allows a husband to object to his wife's exercise of a profession different from his own, in the interests of the marriage and the children. It should nevertheless be noted that such an objection must be filed with the court, which must act rule thereon within a time limit of 10 days, but must first hear both spouses. It is an obsolete provision, for where such an application to the court is made by the husband, it is now the provisions of Article 16 of CEDAW that are applicable. Nevertheless, such provisions will not be included in the future Civil Code and are not part of the Labour Code.

- (b) to adopt legal provisions to cover all circumstances of sexual harassment;**

Sexual harassment is listed as an offence in the draft update of the Penal Code. A charge of sexual harassment will cover most if not all relevant circumstances, as the Code provides punishments for whoever abuses the authority of his position to harass another by giving orders, making threats, imposing constraints or exerting pressure in order obtain sexual favours.

When women domestic workers are found to have been subjected to violence, deprivation of freedom or exploitation, the alleged perpetrators are liable to the punishments laid down in the Penal Code for violence and deliberate assault (Article 278 et seq.) or for sequestration (Article 291, which lays down punishments for whoever anyone in any manner deprives another of his or her liberty) or even for abuse of the vulnerable (Article 349). For the purposes of this charge, the abuse

consists in the exploitation of the needs and weaknesses of a minor; the circumstances that might constitute such abuse are left to the discretion of the court.

It should be added that the draft Labour Code will protect employers and employees alike from moral or sexual harassment. Article 102 states, in para. 1, that: “within the company or establishment or in their immediate vicinity, all acts constituting moral or sexual harassment are forbidden”; and, in para. 2, that “moral or sexual harassment may be committed by either an employer or a worker; no hierarchical relationship need exist between the victim and the perpetrator”; again, in para. 3, “the burden of proof of the harassment falls on the plaintiff”; and “staff and union representatives within the company or establishment may exercise their right to sound the alarm in the event of moral or sexual harassment.”

**(c) Measures taken to expedite the reform extending social security to women working in the informal sector.**

The main foci of the reform and modernization of Cameroon’s social security system are:

- strengthening of existing measures;
- expansion of the personal and material scope of application of social security.

As regards the expansion of social security, a range of measures is under consideration to cover participants in the informal economy. It is important to note, however, that expansion of the personal scope of Social Security is neutral in that it will extend to all residents of Cameroon. Among the goals of the reform is to establish equality between public sector workers, subject both to the overall Public Service Act and by individual enactments, and all workers subject to the Labour Code, and to extend social security coverage to previously marginalized groups (the self-employed, workers of the informal sector, etc.).

Act No. 84/007 of 4 July 1984, which amended Act No. 69/18 of 10 November 1969, establishes an old-age pension scheme including disability and death benefits; it states, in Article 3, para. 3, that persons not covered by Article 2 may obtain insurance voluntarily; however, in that case, the dues are entirely for their own account.

Article 2 provides that a decree will set the conditions and modalities for coverage of the voluntarily insured.

To give effect to the above-mentioned Article 2 and to expedite the expansion of social security coverage to uninsured groups, including workers of the informal sector (it should be noted that the informal economy accounts for nearly 60% of Cameroon’s labour force), the National Advisory Commission for Labour met once again on 20 August 2013 to present its technical advice on the draft decree setting out the conditions and modalities of social security coverage for the voluntarily insured. Once the decree is issued, the self-employed and workers in the informal economy who are able to contribute may register directly with the social security organization, i.e. the National Social Insurance Fund, without the need for an intermediary.

**(a) labour exploitation and hazardous working conditions faced by women and girls on cocoa plantations;**

It should be noted that the Labour Code protects women and children in the field of employment. Article 83, para. 1, states that “the responsible labour inspector may require women and children to be examined by a qualified medical practitioner, to verify that the work they do is not beyond their strength.” Further, para. 2 provides that “no woman or child may be obliged to continue doing work demonstrably beyond their strength, but must be assigned to more suitable work. If that is impossible, the contract shall be terminated at the expense of the employer.”

**(b) labour exploitation, violence and deprivation of freedoms suffered by women and domestic workers;**

**(c) the exploitation of girls in foster families.**

**Health**

Please tell us about the other measures envisaged to address: (a) the rate of maternal mortality, which remains high; (b) the numerous cases of vesicovaginal fistula; and (c) the persistent inaccessibility of basic health services, including basic obstetric services.

Please indicate the measures envisaged to increase: (a) availability of and access to comprehensive education on health and sexual and reproductive rights as well as family planning services, (b) the rate of contraceptive use.

Please also tell us whether the Government is considering the legalization of abortion in cases of rape or incest or where a pregnancy imperils the life and/or health of the mother, and keep us informed on the implementation and impact of the 2011–2015 National Strategic Plan against HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

**Response of the Government of Cameroon**

**(a) On the rate of maternal mortality, which remains high**

In order to reduce the maternal mortality rate, which remains a major concern of the Government of Cameroon as it seeks development that will benefit its people, a National Strategic Plan for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (NSP/RMNCH) has been drawn up covering the 2014–2020 period. The purpose of the Plan is to refocus government action in this area by promoting high-impact actions that can be used to monitor and accelerate the reduction of morbidity and maternal, newborn, child and adolescent mortality. The Strategic Plan includes such components as:

- maternal and child health;
- family health;
- control of STIs and HIV/AIDS;
- measures to tackle infertility and sexual dysfunction;
- the fight against harmful practices;

- reproductive health for adolescents and young people;
- control of genital and breast cancers;
- support for the reproductive health of the elderly.

The actions taken under this national strategic plan are aligned with those of the 2001-2015 Sectoral Health Strategy and will lead to an improvement in sectoral indicators including those concerning the reduction of morbidity and maternal mortality. They are based on a vision that may be formulated as follows: a Cameroon that enjoys universal access to quality reproductive health care and services thanks to supply management and demand financing.

The mandate of the strategic plan is to promote, facilitate and support high-impact RMNCH service delivery, as well as demand, in an integrated, efficient and effective manner, so as to accelerate the reduction of morbidity and mortality among mothers, newborns, children, adolescents and men.

The strategic plan's overall objective, in the area of reproductive health, is to help reduce morbidity and mortality among mothers, newborns, children, adolescents and men by 2020.

The specific objectives to achieve this goal are as follows:

- to reduce maternal mortality from 782 to 500 per 100,000 live births between 2014 and 2020, a reduction of 6.2% a year;
- to reduce the incidence of early pregnancies and STIs/HIV infections in adolescents and young people by 50% by 2020;
- to reduce newborn deaths by 31 to 20 per 1,000 live births between 2010 and 2020, a reduction of 6.1% a year;
- to reduce infant and child deaths from 122 to 80 per 1,000 live births, a reduction of 7% a year, between 2004 and 2020;
- to provide appropriate, standard care for at least 60% of reproductive cancers detected by 2020;
- to ensure appropriate screening and care for at least 60% of cases of obstetric fistula by 2020;
- to ensure at least a 60% increase in the control of harmful practices in the area of RMNCH and violence against women by 2020;
- to ensure appropriate management of at least 60% of the reproductive health issues specific to older persons by 2020;
- to ensure appropriate management of at least 60% of sexual dysfunctions and infertility cases;
- to increase the rate of contraceptive use for all women of child-bearing age to 27%.

To achieve these specific objectives, seven strategic priorities have been defined, as follows:

- integrated communication at all levels to mobilize citizens around RMNCH, making the survival of women and children a national cause;

- removal of financial barriers to access to essential RMNCH care, giving especial priority to the most vulnerable groups and the poorest districts;
- matching of supply and care (quantity and quality);
- capacity building for health workers;
- attention to problems of governance and management of the health care system;
- enhancement of the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of implementation;
- enhancement of the process of implementation of community-directed actions.

Responsibilities are defined by level to ensure the implementation of this strategic plan. Thus:

MINSANTE provides technical leadership and broad guidelines. It is responsible for resource mobilization and RMNCH advocacy. To that end, a Maternal and Child Health Technical Working Group (GTT-SME) was set up under Decision No. 0387/d/MINSANTE/SG/CT2 of 13 August 2012 in support of the implementation monitoring and steering committee

Generally speaking, specific roles and responsibilities are assigned to the Technical Directorate, including:

- the Family Health Directorate (DSF), which facilitates, supervises and coordinates technical activities related to the objectives of the strategic plan;
- the Financial Resources Directorate (DFR), which ensures that expenditures for implementation of the strategic plan in the programme are posted to the MINSANTE programme budget;
- the Department of Pharmacy, Medicine and Laboratories (DPML), which, in conjunction with DSF, regulates medication and other inputs and ensures their availability;
- the Operational Research Division (Health) (DROS), which works in collaboration with DSF to identify RMNCH research topics, prepare and execute studies and disseminate their findings widely;
- the Human Resources Directorate (DRH), which ensures the effective implementation of the human resources development plan;
- the Directorate for Organization of Health Care and Technology (DOST), which ensures the quality of equipment at all points of care;
- the Disease Control Directorate (DLM), which facilitates capacity building for staff at every level in the fight against reproductive health infections by developing technical guidelines, standards, protocols and training manuals in conjunction with DSF;
- the Health Promotion Directorate (DPS).

At the regional level, the strategic plan is implemented under the supervision of the Regional Public Health Authority, which:

- acquaints health districts with the RMNCH strategic plan;

- provides technical support for implementation of the plan;
- coordinates, follows up and supervises RMNCH in the regions;
- conducts operational research and does RMNCH capacity building for districts;
- acts as a training clearing-house;

At district level, the plan is implemented through similar activities, in particular:

- dissemination of the plan;
- technical support for planning and implementation of the plan;
- operational research;
- identification of training needs;
- a review of maternal deaths;
- underwriting of RMNCH activities in municipalities' budgets.

As regards health training (health centres, CMAs and hospitals), activities include:

- inclusion of RMNCH activities in action plans;
- provision of quality RMNCH services;
- provision of RMNCH inputs (consumables, drugs, equipment, etc.);
- reviews of maternal deaths;
- data gathering.

The other authorities involved are:

- MINEPAT;
- MINFI;
- MINCOM;
- MINEDUB;
- MINESEC;
- MINPROFF;
- MINNJEC;
- MINJUSTICE;
- MINATD;
- MINMEE;
- MINADER;
- regional and local authorities;
- civil society organizations (opinion leaders and traditional, political and religious authorities);
- technical and financial partners.

In the same context, the fight against maternal and child mortality in Cameroon, we should note the ongoing implementation of the Support Project to Accelerate Progress in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health in Cameroon, jointly developed by the Government and six United Nations System agencies as part of the H4+ effort, namely WHO, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank.

Funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the project will be implemented in five health districts of the Far North region, specifically in rural and urban Maroua, Guidiguiss, Moulvoudaye and Koza, districts whose health and socio-economic indicators are among the lowest in Cameroon.

The project will last 30 months (July 2013–December 2015). It will enjoy the cooperation of the Regional Delegation for the Advancement of Women and the Family in the Far North region and local NGOs, under the supervision of MINPROFF. Its overall objective is to promote and strengthen community engagement to increase demand for and use of services of reproductive health and maternal, newborn and child health services. It will consist of the following:

- awareness-building among traditional leaders to promote their involvement;
- training of 200 traditional chiefs and community leaders, including young people, in self-assessment, and community mobilization to increase the demand for RMNCH services in the 5 selected medical districts;
- support for 200 community structures (women, women's groups, men's groups, women living with HIV, community groups, etc.) to implement RMNCH and PMTCT services;
- setting up a recognition award system for best practices in the area of RMNCH service delivery and/or community involvement at the district level.

To ensure that the project is efficiently and effectively implemented, a draft decree by the Prime Minister and Head of Government is being finalized that will create a national programme to combat maternal, neonatal and infant/child mortality.

**(b) On vesicovaginal fistulae**

Obstetric fistulae are a reality in Cameroon. Their prevalence is estimated at 0.4% (source DHS/MICS IV, 2011). In other words, 19,000 Cameroonian women present with fistulae.

The Government is striving, with its partners' support, to stamp out this scourge. The strategy implemented for this purpose is based on constitutional provisions. Cameroon has enshrined the right to health in its constitution as a fundamental right of the citizen. The strategy has the following components:

- awareness;
- prevention;
- training;
- care;
- operational research.

Following these orientations, the results below have been achieved:

- a situational analysis of obstetric fistulae has been done in the home areas;
- awareness campaigns have been organized. The first edition of the International Day to End Obstetric Fistula, observed on 23 May 2013, took place within the framework of social mobilization and awareness-building among stakeholders in order to intensify the fight against obstetric fistula. In that context, a joint press conference was organized in Yaoundé, with MINSANTE, MINPROFF and UNFPA;
- organization of campaigns to surgically repair fistulae. Nearly a thousand patients were operated on free of charge in collaboration with UNFPA, the Women and Health Association (WAHA), Switzerland's Jennifer Foundation and Madame Chantal Biya, First Lady of Cameroon. Because surgery to correct fistula can cost 200,000 CFA francs, which is unaffordable for patients, These campaigns are invaluable benefit for patients and their families, as their economic plight is generally very difficult;
- psychosocial support for 700 women who were operated on under the obstetric fistula programme;
- capacity building among community volunteers and social workers in the areas concerned, focusing on prevention and psychosocial support for victims, in particular in the Centre, Adamawa, Eastern, Northern, and Far North regions;
- acquisition and allocation of materials to enable recovering victims to develop income-generating activities in areas such as:
  - grain sales;
  - storage and extraction of peanut oil;
  - agriculture;
  - animal husbandry;
  - small-scale trade;
  - fish smoking;
- implementation of programmes such as:
  - Education for Responsible Parenting (EPR), whose focus is family planning. It seeks to space out births to allow women to regain their health after giving birth;
  - the Prenuptial, Marriage and Family Education Programme, which covers essentially promotion of reproductive health and family planning;
  - CARMMA, which focuses in particular on capacity building among women and families in terms of strategies for reducing maternal and child mortality, with a component related to family planning;
  - training of 15 doctors in the home areas in the surgical repair of injuries caused by obstetric fistula.

**Measures taken to ensure availability of and access to comprehensive education on health and sexual and reproductive rights as well as family planning services**

Measures relating to this area of concern are summarized in the RMNCH policy.

**On the decriminalization of abortion in cases of rape or incest**

Therapeutic abortion and termination of a pregnancy resulting from rape are not criminalized in Cameroon, under the provisions of Articles 337-339 of the Penal Code below:

*“Article 337 - Abortion*

*(1) A woman who seeks an abortion for herself or consents to it shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of fifteen days to one year and/or a fine of 5,000 to 200,000 francs.*

*(2) Whoever procures an abortion for a woman, even with her consent, shall be punished by a term of imprisonment for from one to five years and a fine of from 100,000 to 2,000,000 francs.*

*(3) The sentences in para. 2 shall be doubled:*

- In the case of any person who regularly engages in abortions;*
- In the case of a person plying a medical or related trade.*

*(4) An order for such persons’ business premises to be closed and for them to be forbidden to practise may also be made under Articles 34 and 36 of this Code.*

*Article 338 - Violence against a pregnant woman.*

*Whoever by inflicting violence on a pregnant woman or a child being born causes, even unintentionally, the child’s or permanent disability shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of five to ten years and a fine of 100,000 to 2,000,000 francs.*

*Article 339 - Exceptions.*

*(1) Articles 337 and 338 shall not apply if the acts are performed by an authorized person and are justified by the need to save the mother from a serious danger to her health.*

*(2) Where the pregnancy results from rape, medical abortion shall not be deemed an offence provided the facts in the case are first attested by the public prosecutor’s office.”*

Abortion in the case of incest is not yet covered by criminal law.

**Information on the implementation and impact of the 2011–2015 National Strategic Plan against HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases.**

The Government of Cameroon’s approach to this issue is based on PMTCT. Thus, the plan to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV was implemented in 2011. Twenty-nine of the 36 priority districts, namely those with poor PMTCT coverage, have drawn up micro-plans with their partners’ support. Only 25% of HIV-positive pregnant women are receiving antiretrovirals (ARVs), and only 12% of HIV-positive children are on antiretroviral treatment. It should be noted that in the context of PMTCT, care is provided completely free of charge for pregnant women,

Access to treatment is all the easier in that the government has adopted the B+ option. The Task Delegation Guide for HIV/AIDS care adopted in 2011 is currently coming into effect.

In general, the strategic plan referred to contains forecasts in terms of antenatal consultation (ANC) and PMTCT.

As regards ANC, national coverage is up sharply since the implementation of the district approach to PMTCT adopted in 2005. Since 2006, the number of health training facilities offering PMTCT services has more than doubled, to 2,999 out of the 3,500 training facilities across the 181 health districts in Cameroon in 2012.

In 2012, at the national level, of the expected total of 1,019,341 pregnant women, only 426,875, or 41.9%, were seen at ANCs. That rate is up by more than 5 percentage points compared to 2011 (36.5%) but is still in need of improvement.

As regards PMTCT and **HIV testing of pregnant women**, in 2012, 342,387 pregnant women received the HIV screening test, an overall acceptance rate of 80.2%, though it varied from a low of 40.5% in the Northern region to a maximum of 112.9% in the Coastal region, whereas in the Southwestern region it was 100.3%. The acceptance rate of over 100% reflects the fact that HIV testing is also offered and carried out in the delivery room on women of unknown HIV status who were not included in ANC, as well as double counting of women who go to different health facilities during their pregnancy for ANC.

The Northern, Far North and Adamawa regions have the lowest HIV testing rates for pregnant women: 40.5%, 50.8% and 55.9%, respectively. The northern region has one of the highest ANC attendance rates but the lowest testing rate, while the Far North region has both low ANC attendance and low testing rates. The Centre and Coastal regions, which include 19 of the 39 priority districts for elimination of mother-to-child transmission, have rates of HIV testing at ANCs in excess of 90% despite their low ANC attendance. Hence, communities need to be made aware of the need for pregnant women to be tested, and the capacity of providers to offer HIV testing during ANCs needs to be enhanced.

**With regard to the supply of prophylactic cotrimoxazole for HIV-positive pregnant women**, in 2012 12,312 HIV-positive pregnant women, out of a total identified cohort of 20,807, or 59.1%, received prophylactic treatment with cotrimoxazole. Relative to the entire population, however, coverage remains very low (15.1%), though it is up slightly from 2011 (10.5%).

The areas best covered are the Northwest, East, South-West and Coastal regions, at 30.2%, 22.7%, 19.1% and 19.1% respectively. The least well covered are the Northern, Far North and Central regions, at 10.6%, 8.4% and 8.2% respectively. The other regions have coverage between those extremes.

Again, 17,362 HIV-positive pregnant women received ARVs for PMTCT, but only 12,312 of them received cotrimoxazole, a difference of 5,050 HIV-positive women in total (29.1%), the percentage varying from one region to another. The number of women who received intermittent treatment for malaria has not been reported, but the lack of it could influence success in preventing opportunistic infections in pregnant women.

**As regards the baseline CD4 workups offered to HIV-positive pregnant women, of the 20,807 HIV-positive pregnant women** diagnosed in 2012, CD4

counts could be done for only 6,500; thus, the programmatic coverage rate was 31.3% and the population coverage only 8%, which, though it was up slightly from 2011 (6.9%), was far below expectations.

CD4s were found to be less than 350/mm<sup>3</sup> in 54% of the HIV-positive pregnant women tested, pointing to the lateness of the testing, at a time when their infection is already well advanced.

**As regards ARV coverage for HIV-positive pregnant women**, during 2012, of the 6,505 HIV-positive pregnant women who had a CD4 workup, 3,514 were candidates for antiretroviral treatment (CD4 <350/mm<sup>3</sup>), but 4,966 HIV-positive women ultimately received ARV therapy. They included those women biologically eligible (CD4 <350/mm<sup>3</sup>), those clinically eligible (WHO stage 3 or 4), and those who became pregnant while already on ARVs.

ARV prophylaxis was administered to 12,396 more women in 2012: AZT alone from 14 weeks, then AZT/3TC and Nevirapine at birth, followed by AZT/3TC for 7 days post-partum.

In all, of the 20,807 HIV-positive pregnant women identified during the reference year, 17,362 were put on some course of ARVs, a programmatic coverage of 83.4%.

National coverage for this goal remains low, however, at 21.4% of the 79,509 HIV-positive pregnant women expected in 2012, as against 20.3% in 2011.

Other activities were carried out:

- 7,485 women and families were made aware of HIV/STI prevention and PMTCT;
- 2,000 families were made aware of HIV prevention and PMTCT;
- 205 persons were screened free of charge (190 women and 15 men (16 women and 5 men being HIV-positive));
- Follow-up of 186 women placed on ARVs;
- 40 community volunteers trained;
- Malaria awareness sessions for 214 persons;
- 616 women provided with premarital and neonatal consultations (PNCs);
- 317 persons including 132 pregnant women and 185 children;
- 110 family planning sessions held with girls, couples;
- 103 learners sensitized to reproductive health and personal hygiene;
- Organization of sessions on methods of HIV/AIDS prevention for 10,000 women;
- Organization of sessions on the importance of early HIV/AIDS detection for 33 persons, including 31 women and 1 man;
- Organization of campaigns on HIV transmission from mother to child for 131 people, including 128 women and 3 men;

- With UNICEF support, a project was set up to mobilize communities, pregnant women and families for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT) and the optimal use of antenatal clinics (ANC) and HIV/AIDS prevention by girls in Cameroon's 15 health districts, namely: Ayos, Bafia, Bertoua, Garoua Boulai, Bamenda, Bali, Santa, Ebolawa, Kribi, Edéa, Cité des palmiers, Buea, Tiko, Ngaoundéré, Meiganga.

## **Marital and family relationships**

The report states that the Civil Code and the Family Code are in course of revision (para. 43 and 46). Please indicate whether the Government plans to purge those enactments of their discriminatory provisions, including those relating to polygamy, disparities in the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys, early and forced marriage, and the husband's role as the head of the household.

Please also keep us informed of any measures taken to revise the provisions of customary law that discriminate against women in the area of inheritance rights.

### **Response of the Government of Cameroon**

Cameroon is engaged in law reform in the justice sector. In particular, the reform is aimed at bringing domestic legislation in line with the international legal instruments relating to human rights that Cameroon has ratified; one of its objectives is to promote gender equality by eliminating provisions that discriminate against women and enacting legislation to implement the provisions of the Conventions. Such is the context in which a new Civil Code is being drawn up.

Its focus is on bringing national legislation into conformity with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); for example, the draft Civil Code and/or the Code of Persons and the Family set the minimum age for marriage at 18 years for men and women alike.

As regards polygamy, consultations are underway to assess whether polygamy should be kept as one form of marriage. However, it should be emphasized that the betrothed are free to choose between monogamy and polygamy at their wedding and that no marriage may be solemnized if they do not agree on the form of marriage. Cameroon is, moreover, a party to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, a regional legal instrument that requires Member States to encourage monogamy as the preferred form of marriage while defending women's rights in polygamous marital relationships.

As regards the role of head of the household recognized by the Civil Code, discussions are under way with a view to adopting the best formula for Cameroonian society.

As for early and forced marriages, they are already banned and punishable under the existing Penal Code, as noted above.

Discrimination against women in matters of inheritance is not based on a written law that can readily be revised. Customs that deny women their parents' legacy are considered contrary to law and public order and cannot be upheld by a traditional court. If a court does uphold them, its ruling is void; there is abundant case law in that area. Here are some examples:

- The Supreme Court’s rulings No. 43 of 16 January 1978 and No. 157 of 25 June 1978, in which it found that “ ... the Douala custom that deprives women of their inheritance rights has become inapplicable since the adoption of the Constitution of 2 June 1972, which proclaims the equality of all Cameroonian citizens regardless of gender; hence, the ruling under appeal, which held that according to Douala custom, women are not entitled to inherit nor to share in the inheritance, which is divided between the male children, is at variance with the constitutional principle and is hereby quashed.”
- Ruling No. 38/L 14 May 1998 in the case of Makeu Dorothée v. Fongang Dorat. The Supreme Court quashed decision No. 109/L, rendered on 22 April 1994 by the Customary Chamber of the Court of Appeal—which had given preference, between the two co-heirs, to the man, based on Bamiléké custom—on the grounds that: “... “ ... according to the preamble to the Constitution of Cameroon, all human beings are free and equal in rights and duties and, under Article 745 of the Civil Code, their children or descendants inherit from their father and mother regardless of sex or primogeniture; that is a legal requirement of public policy, which takes precedence over the contrary Bamiléké custom invoked by Fongang Dorat. The preamble to the Constitution and Article 745 of the Civil Code restore equality, thus combating discrimination against women.
- Ruling No. 363/CC of 29 September 2005 endorsed the designation of an heiress daughter as principal heir to her late father’s estate. The comment on this decision by Cameroon’s highest court in its 2007 annual report was that: “This decision, the first rendered in favour of a female person, is in agreement with the Constitution of Cameroon and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which advocate equality for all. Further, it reflects the 1979 text of CEDAW, which has force of law in Cameroon.”

## **Rural women**

Pleas provide us with full information on the situation of rural women in all areas covered by the Convention, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/CMR/CO/3), and on any concrete measures planned to eliminate discrimination against rural women in the areas of access to and control and ownership of land. Please also advise what measures have been taken or are planned to guarantee rural women equal access to basic services, including health, education, infrastructure, and economic opportunity, including income-generating projects and credit facilities, on equal and equitable terms with men and with urban women.

### **1. Situation of rural women in the areas covered by the Convention**

As yet there has been no formal, targeted investigation to provide timely, comprehensive quantitative data on the situation of rural women in Cameroon in all areas of activity. The conduct of such costly investigations is among the challenges currently faced by the State Party in its endeavour to upgrade and modernize its system for collecting disaggregated data.

However, some (essentially qualitative) information is available.

Thus, the 3rd General Population and Housing Census shows that women make up 50.6% of Cameroon's population of 19,406,100. Rural women make up 71.6% of the female workforce involved in the official informal sector.

An analysis of the living and working conditions of this cohort of women, whose labour feeds the towns and the countryside in Cameroon as a whole and in the Sub-Region, highlights:

- their poor access to training, information, basic social services, new production techniques and technologies, land, inputs (fertilizers, improved seeds, pesticides etc.), reproductive health care, conventional markets, credit, and food conservation and processing technology;
- post-harvest losses related to isolation and poor facilities for food storage, conservation and processing;
- poverty;
- overload and difficulty of work due to the patriarchal organization of society and the lack of agricultural machinery;
- little involvement in economic activities such as animal husbandry and crafts;
- a lack of leisure due to unremitting daily chores and the social conception of women's role.

**2. Measures planned to eliminate discrimination against rural women in terms of access to and control and ownership of land.**

Land law in the Republic of Cameroon makes no distinction between women and men, either in the cities or in the countryside. Land ownership is legally open to Cameroonian citizens of both sexes on an equal footing. Discrimination against women appears at the level of practices and customs, in particular in rural areas. Such discrimination stems from the organization of society. In some families, girls are not counted in the division of the inheritance, because it is thought that they will share in their husband's family's inheritance; while the husband's family, in turn, sees his wife as part of its inheritance.

To find a solution to this situation, the Government, with the support of the social partners, is increasingly engaging in awareness and advocacy activities, seeking equal treatment of men and women, girls and boys. The Government is also seeking to make women's rights, and the legal instruments for the protection of those rights, universally known. Public-service announcements to that effect are produced with the help of MINJUSTICE and such civil society organizations as ACAFEJ and Association of Women Bailiffs.

Finally, through the legal unit of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, the Government is providing women with legal aid in proceedings initiated by them over land.

It should be noted that a strategy document for the promotion of women's access to land is being developed, setting out avenues for intervention and actions to be taken on a defined schedule. Finalization and implementation of that strategic plan will, beyond a doubt, mark a decisive step in this area.

**3. Measures taken or planned to ensure rural women equal access to basic services, including health, education, infrastructure, economic opportunities, income-generating projects, and credit.**

For over two decades, the issue of rural women has been at the centre of the Cameroon government's development strategies. That policy was clearly laid out in the inaugural statement by the Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya, in November 1997, in which he made a commitment to taking action in key areas of concern to rural women; a vital commitment given the role played by rural women in increasing the country's food security, as the main actors from production right through to marketing.

To give concrete form to that political will, measures are being taken at various ministerial departments, in particular those concerned with the advancement of women and with rural development. Those measures pertain to:

- promotion of the employment of rural women in all sectors of development;
- promotion and dissemination of technologies appropriate to the activities of rural women;
- efforts to mitigate the poverty affecting rural women;
- development and implementation of measures to facilitate the integration of rural women into the management of environment-related problems;
- implementation of the new agricultural policy, which, among other things, places an emphasis on the gender approach;
- increasing integration of rural women into various environmental protection programmes, in particular: Cameroon's National Forestry Action Plan (PAFN), the National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) and the National Strategy and Plan on Biological Diversity;
- encouragement and involvement of women in technical supervision for rural populations;
- creation of projects and programmes with specific components for rural women in such areas as training and information, the extension of credit, and improved living conditions;
- granting of financial and material aid;
- recognition of the role played by rural women through the countrywide observation, in conjunction with the international community, of the International Day of Rural Women (15 October).

That political will is manifested, as well, through the implementation of programmes and projects supported by bilateral and multilateral partners.

Three stakeholders may be identified at that level, namely: Government and civil society.

## I. The Government

Among the actions taken are:

- the formation and mentoring of women's groups (more than 15,000 women's groups are listed in the register of cooperative societies and common initiative groups (COOP-GIC);
- the conduct of studies on how to set up food processing units (cheese, cassava processing etc.);
- the creation of women's cooperatives to produce and market food crops;
- support for women's groups in the form of agro-pastoral equipment;
- efforts to finance rural women's projects;
- the organization of visits between rural women from various communities, and between those of Cameroon and of the sub-region, to compare notes. These interregional exchange visits have continued as part of the activities marking the observation of the 28th edition of International Women's Day in Cameroon;
- outreach work to acquaint rural women with their rights and duties;
- the formation of women's groups to process food crops and livestock products (bananas, fish, milk, meat, etc.);
- the recruitment of female extension workers for the National Agricultural Extension and Research Programme (PNVRA), specifically to train women farmers and guarantee rural women access to technical information;
- since 1986, in the area of animal husbandry and livestock industries, 14% of all permits for the establishment and operation of poultry farms have been granted to women, while the corresponding figures for hog farms and feed stores are 14.5% and 7.5% respectively;
- Centres for the Advancement of Women have been set up. There are now some thirty in Cameroon, in all ten regions, some in villages. Others are under construction or in the planning stages on the site of mainstay projects; these will be technical units specializing in hands-on support for rural women: in family planning services, counselling, functional literacy, and training in such subjects as project setup and management, ICTs, the clothing trade, and agro-pastoralism, etc.;
- because the Government has additional resources now that the point of completion has been reached under the HIPC initiative, it has established a rotating fund at the centres to enable women, including the rural women they have trained, to become self-employed through micro-structures created and managed by themselves. That fund, referred to in the 4th and 5th Report, is still at work in the northern and western regions, and has enabled production structures to be set up whose proceeds are helping lift rural women out of poverty;
- the road construction project for Ambam-Eking, Melong, and Dschang has spawned related activities to benefit countryfolk in the area, in particular development of marketplaces for food crops, installation of public taps and

mustering tracks, Centres for the Advancement of Women and food processing facilities. Thanks to these support structures, family planning services, counselling, and literacy classes can be provided to rural women to help them develop income-generating activities and escape the scourges of illiteracy, poverty and STI/HIV/AIDS that beset them.

With respect to the CPFs, it should be noted that to enable rural women to engage in market gardening in border areas, Cameroon has, with the support of UN Women, established day nurseries, in particular in the town of Kyé-Ossi at the borders of Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea;

- in Maroua an Appropriate Technology Centre (CTA) has been established. This is an extension centre specializing in appropriate technologies (improved stoves, agricultural equipment, etc.) to ease rural women's hard labour in their domestic tasks and field work;
- display and sale spaces for rural women's agro-pastoral products are being developed; such has been the case of the Agricultural Shows, the most recent of which took place in Ebolowa (Southern Region) in 2012. The Head of State personally emceed the event, which was attended by thousands of rural women, who thereby were able to sell their wares and reap the fruits of their labours;
- a so-called cassava festival is held annually in Ngoulemakong (Southern Region). On that occasion, rural women have the opportunity to sell large quantities of cassava. The activity is supported by the Government through MINADER, MINCOMMERCE, and MINPROFF;
- the Government is pushing forward with the establishment of food processing facilities. One such, a cassava processing plant, has been inaugurated at Pouma (Central Region);
- the establishment of community radio stations to benefit rural women, affording them access to agricultural information and information of other kinds, on political, cultural and health issues;
  - The development companies active in agri-food are also incorporating the gender component into their endeavours. These are: the Cotton Development Company (SODECOTON), the Rice Expansion and Modernization Company of Yagoua (SEMRY), the Cameroon Oil Palm Company (SOCAPALM), the Northwest Development Authority (MIDENO) and the Cameroon Sugar Company (CAMSUCO).
  - The Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD) is also furnishing improved seeds for use by women.

A number of international NGOs are taking up the cause of rural women. A case in point is the African Institute for Economic and Social Development (INADES Training).

All of these NGOs' collaboration with the Government helps improve rural women's well-being and build their capacities. All of them, however, still face different degrees of difficulties raising money to meet the many basic needs of women, on the one hand, but must also deal with the dearth of financial and logistical resources.

Ambitious programmes and projects are being tackled, some of whose components specifically target rural women:

#### **National Agricultural Extension and Research Programme (PNVRA)**

Newly refocused on direct support for production groups, the programme is laying particular emphasis on women's groups in rural areas, in particular with respect to agricultural equipment and infrastructure.

#### **National Roots and Tubers Development Programme (IFAD loan No. 606-cm)**

The goal of the National Roots and Tubers Development Programme (PNDRT), completed in 2010, was to improve food security and the livelihoods of rural people, especially women. Upon completion of the programme, the target groups were to have (i) acquired the capacity to sustainably produce roots and tubers; (ii) adopted appropriate techniques and better management; (iii) increased their income by at least 50%. The programme was to increase the supply of roots and tubers by means of intensified production systems, reduced post-harvest losses and product diversification, as well as by implementing industry-standard protective measures to meet consumer needs and by enhancing marketing efforts. The intervention strategy was to be based on a value chain approach whereby stakeholders at the various links in the chain would be connected in order to meet the market's specific requirements.

PNDRT actions focused mainly on rural smallholders and small-scale processors, and more particularly women, who made up 67% of the membership of farmers' organizations and 60% of the management teams of the organizations supported. Some 18,000 households took advantage of the programme, representing 108,000 persons, 62.5% of them women. PNDRT was active in 10 regions.

The emphasis was on transformation of their production systems, official recognition of their status as farmers' organizations, establishment of a business relationship with equipment suppliers, intermediate consumers (agri-food and agro-industrial companies), end consumers (rural or urban households), and input suppliers (research, private sector, seed growers, public (MINADER) and private (NGOs) support and advice organizations, consultancy firms), individual consultants, and market information systems.

Yields essentially doubled, from 7.1 t/ha to 14.1 and 13.9 t/ha in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

The programme made available to women engaged in processing: 17 pulp mills, 14 flour mills, 21 graters, 15 mechanical presses, 6 ovens and 5 Djilemo ovens, 13 gari roasters, 102 huskers, 63 tanks and 321 soaking barrels. It built 13 shelters for processing units. As a result, gross operating margin increased from 961,500 to 2,930,000 CFA francs for the Bamenyam UGIC specializing in the sale of cassava chips, and 2,641,200 CFA francs for the FEDDIM GIC, which specializes in the processing and production of starch, flour and couscous.

#### **Mushroom Cultivation Development Project (PFDC)**

Its general objective was to develop the mushroom industry as an income-generating activity through the training of farmers' organizations in collection, packaging and conservation techniques for natural mushrooms. Women were among

the beneficiaries of this project, which resulted in the production of 36 tonnes of mushrooms (fresh oyster mushrooms).

#### **Decentralized Rural Credit Project (PCRD).**

This is a programme to develop a sustainable and functional rural savings and credit system. Its purpose is to promote the establishment and strengthening of self-managed village savings and credit unions, to reduce poverty and sustainably improve the living conditions of rural populations.

Under this project, rural women, who do not have access to bank loans, gain eligibility for funding in the form of low-interest loans to develop income-generating activities.

#### **Agricultural Competitiveness Improvement Project (PACA)**

PACA, which is conducted with the support of the World Bank, aims to support smallholders and farm groups in direct market production and sales, to upgrade country roads and 12,000 ha of disenclosed land suitable for 6 types of agricultural production (rice, maize, plantain, oil palm, pork, poultry and small ruminants) in 30 districts in the Central, Eastern, Far North, Coastal, Northwestern, Western and Southern departments.

- the ACEFA project, which provides funding for rural organizations' projects, including acquisition of agricultural inputs and agricultural equipment, is accessible to rural women;
- some one billion CFA francs a year is appropriated from the public investment budget (BIP) to allow MINADER to make grants to rural organizations, up to a million francs each;
- PADMIR, a project to support development of rural microfinance, enables rural organizations with bankable projects to obtain credit from microfinance institutions;
- the proposed establishment of a support system for poor women at Centres for the Advancement of Women (PDA/CPF), whose main objective is to provide support for women engaged in income-generating activities, such support taking the form of microcredit granted through microfinance institutions after the women have undergone training in project setup and management. To date, more than 5,000 microprojects put forward by women have been funded countrywide, amounting to 708,000,600 CFA francs;
- Rural Women Support Project: Its main objective is the distribution of agricultural equipment and machinery to rural women to reduce the drudgery of their work and increase productivity;
- The Support Programme for the Creation and Development of Small and Medium Enterprises to Process and Conserve Local Consumer Products (PACD/PME) is active countrywide. Each promoter receives personalized support and a line of credit for SMEs.

More generally, a programme to provide inclusive microfinance is under preparation by the Ministry of Finance. Much is expected of the recently announced Farm Bank.

- MIRAP, the Consumer Product Supply Regulatory Authority, enables foodstuffs from rural organizations to reach urban centres.
- PAFICIT, the Support Programme for Women in Informal Trans-border Trade, which enjoys support from UN Women, is focused on rural and urban poverty reduction through the improvement of the economic status of women working in informal trans-border trade. It applies specific measures to facilitate trade in border areas in the South, Southwest and Far North.

### **National Food Security Programme (PNSSA)**

This programme is intended to increase agricultural, livestock and fisheries productivity through the introduction of improved or adapted seeds (breeds) and the supply of other inputs.

Those who stand to benefit from it are the country's most vulnerable, and in particular those whose livelihoods are primarily based on agricultural and rural activities and their socio-professional organizations. Women belong to these categories. Under this project, it has been possible to launch more than 29,000 projects, directly benefiting 574,000 families, excluding duplications. The project is present in all 10 regions of the country.

### **Grain storage project**

This project, jointly financed by the IDB, the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Government of Cameroon, seeks to regulate markets in grain-producing and -consuming areas, by constituting reserve stocks and buffers to combat famine and poverty while stabilizing prices from one region to another. It has led to the construction of 31 fully equipped storehouses in the Northern regions.

### **Community Development Support Project (PADC)**

Part of the National Programme for Participatory Development (PNDP), co-financed by IFAD, GIZ, World Bank, AFD and AfDB, the Project seeks to build communities' capacity to devise local development plans, to support villages in setting up development committees, and to endow themselves with a local development fund (LDF). PADC has financed:

- technical assistance to organized producers;
- support in developing a credit profile;
- management support;
- production initiatives of the poorest groups.

## **2. Civil society organizations**

CERAC is an apolitical, non-profit, humanitarian organization, founded in December 1995 under the leadership of its Founding President, Ms Chantal Biya, wife of the President of Cameroon, which has set itself the following goals:

- to offer humanitarian assistance to the needy;
- to contribute to the training of women and the education of girls.

Mindful of the dominant role of rural women in Cameroon, who are more than 80% responsible for our self sufficiency in food and also drive the informal economy, CERAC has developed a purpose-built programme called “Rural Women”.

Under that programme, more than 630 women’s organizations in all 10 regions of the country have received donations, consisting mainly of agro-pastoral equipment that will enable women to develop income-generating activities and reduce the drudgery of their work.

It has yielded satisfactory results in some regions; in particular, rural women have been able to put in fishponds, community fields, health centres and a soap factory, and to produce starch and cassava sticks.

### **Marital and family relationships**

The report states that the Civil Code and the Family Code are in course of revision (para. 43 and 56). Please indicate whether the Government plans to purge those enactments of their discriminatory provisions, including those relating to polygamy, disparities in the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys, early and forced marriage, and the husband’s role as the head of the household. Please also keep us informed of any measures taken to revise the provisions of customary law that discriminate against women in the area of inheritance rights.

### **Response of the Government of Cameroon**

#### **Measures to eliminate harmful practices such as early and forced marriages**

The elements of the preliminary draft Code of Persons and the Family have been added to the preliminary draft Civil Code now being developed. The measures introduced therein seek to stamp out practices that encourage domestic violence, in particular by raising the minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both sexes. That provision, which is taken directly from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, will help limit the practice of early marriages in Cameroon.

Again, the Government is implementing the measures recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality, making promotion and protection of the girl child a priority. In that context, some prefects have issued orders prohibiting harmful cultural practices regarding girls, including early and forced marriages. Disincentives such as police custody, imposition of fines and exclusion from community activities have been employed against perpetrators in some villages.

Other measures include:

- financing of income-generating activities initiated by women and families through the revolving funds established at Centres for the Advancement of Women;
- material and financial assistance to poor and needy families;
- education and awareness-raising in families and communities regarding the fundamental rights of the child, in the context of commemorative days, especially those devoted to women, children, girl children and the family;

- informing and training communities on the principles and provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- organization of sessions of the children's parliament, which give children from every social background the chance to communicate their chief concerns to elected officials and members of the Government;
- production of awareness materials (comics, brochures, posters, flyers, sketches, etc.) on the rights of the child and the struggle against cultural practices harmful to children;
- mobilization of young people in the area of violence against girls through the youth caravan, media debates and the distribution of awareness kits;
- creation of village committees to monitor actions taken to combat cultural practices harmful to girls and women.

Among the initiatives taken with the support of the technical and financial partners are:

- the signing, with Plan Cameroon, of a petition to let girls refuse early and forced marriage, and to encourage girls' access to education through the campaign "Because I'm a Girl";
- education and awareness-raising in families and communities regarding the elimination of early and forced marriages, with UNICEF support;
- the creation of a National Network to Combat Violence against Women, made up of civil society organizations, with the support of the Embassy of France and UN Women;
- capacity building for officers of the court and other legal professionals, including judges, lawyers, bailiffs and notaries, on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for better protection of the rights of women and children.

Civil society organizations (associations and NGOs working in the field) are taking the following actions, among others:

- development and implementation of a platform against violence involving law enforcement bodies, civil society (ALVF, ACAFEJ, Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC), CIPCRE), and line ministries;
- the declaration of the Council of Imams on girls' education;
- the existence of support centres for women and girls in distress run by civil society organizations (Women's Life Centre (CVF) of the Association to Combat Violence against Women and other centres in the regions) and receiving support from the Government and from the technical and financial partners.

Media actions have been to make the international, regional and national legal instruments widely known; to produce and disseminate educational materials; to produce broadcasts in local languages and in French, with the involvement of local administrative and traditional authorities and civil society; to produce and broadcast

documentaries and sketches focusing specifically on the fundamental rights of the child.

**Measures taken to revise the provisions of customary law that discriminate against women in the area of inheritance rights**

The overhaul of the Penal Code has taken into account certain aspects penalizing domestic violence. These include interference with the exercise of rights of succession.

Cameroonian law and jurisprudence gives a woman the right to land as an inheritance from her parents on the same footing as her brothers, whatever her marital status. Thus, she may acquire land by all modes of acquisition recognized in the current Civil Code and may enjoy and dispose of it freely.

**Amendments to Article 20(1) of the Convention**

Please indicate what progress has been made with regard to integration of the amendments to Article 20(1) of the Convention.

**Response of the Government of Cameroon**

Cameroon suggests that the date of the Committee's meetings be postponed to May or June in view of the observation of International Women's Day, which is in March each year.

## ANNEXES

Table 1  
Allocation of legal aid in 2012

Level of jurisdiction	# of claims entered	# of decisions handed down	Denied	Granted		Beneficiaries		Comments
				In whole	In part	M	F	
Trial Ct	89	79	31	44	4	57	22	All remaining claims are pending
Civil Ct	112	66	13	45	8	21	9	Idem
Appeals Ct	19		8	11	0	1	3	Idem
Supreme Ct	19	9	4	5	/	5	/	/
Total	239	154	56	105	12	84	34	9 claims under review, 1 struck

Source: Chief Prosecutor's Offices of the Supreme Court and the Courts of Appeal: Adamawa, Centre, East, Far North, Coastal, Northern, Northwest, West and South.

Table 2  
Change in granting of legal aid from 2011 to 2012

Level of jurisdiction	# of claims entered in 2011	# of claims entered in 2012	Change	# granted in 2011	# granted in 2012	Change
Trial Ct	184	89	-95	105	48	-57
Civil Ct	202	112	-90	177	53	-124
Appeals Ct	34	19	-15	19	13	-6
Supreme Ct	12	19	+7	2	117	+115
Total	432	220	-212	303	112	-191

Source: MINJUSTICE.

**Table 3**  
**Diagnosing problems of Cameroonian women by sector**

<i>Sectors/areas</i>	<i>Nature of problem</i>	<i>Main explanatory factors</i>
Social	Lack of education, information or training among women and girls;	No equitable access for men and women, girls and boys, to education, training and information
	Prevalence of gender-based social inequality, discrimination and violence.	Unequal distribution of power
Health	High maternal death rate and feminization of HIV/AIDS/STIs	Insufficient access for women to health care, in particular with regard to reproductive health
Economy	Women's weak economic status	Unequal access of men and women to economic opportunities and employment
Governance	Under-representation of women in public life and decision-making	Insufficient participation of women in public life
Legislation	Legal instruments pertaining to the rights of women and girls insufficiently implemented and internalized	Insufficient adherence by stakeholders to ratified legal enactments and instruments for the protection of the rights of women and girls
Institutional reinforcement	Poor visibility and impact of policies on gender equity and the advancement of women	Mismatch between the workload of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and their resources

Table 4  
**Change in representation of women in decision-making positions on the judiciary  
 after the meeting of the High Council of the Judiciary on 18 April 2012**

No.	Senior positions	2010					2012					Change in number of positions held by women
		M	F	Total	% M	% F	M	F	Total	% M	% F	
Supreme Court												
1	First President and Head of Chamber	3	0	3	100	0	3	0	3	100	0	0
2	Attorney-General	1	0	1	100	0	1	0	1	100	0	0
3	Counsellors	45	6	51	88.24	11.76	47	5	52	90.38	9.62	-1
4	Advocates-General	10	0	10	100	0	11	0	11	100	0	0
Courts of Appeal												
5	Presidents of Courts of Appeal	9	1	10	90	10	8	2	10	80	20	+1
6	Prosecutors-General	9	1	10	90	10	9	1	10	90	10	0
Trial and civil courts												
7	Court presidents	64	11	75	85.34	14.66	62	15	77	80.52	19.48	+4
8	Public prosecutors	68	2	70	97.15	2.85	66	6	72	91.67	8.33	+4
Ministry of Justice core services												
9	Inspector-General of Services	1	1	2	50	50	1	1	2	50	50	0
10	Technical advisors	0	2	2	0	100	0	2	2	0	100	0
11	Headquarters directors	7	0	7	100	0	4	2	6	66.67	33.33	+2
12	Inspectors at the Inspectorate-General of Judicial Services	5	1	6	83.34	16.66	4	2	6	66.67	33.33	+1
13	Assistant directors and related	14	6	20	70	30	13	7	20	65	35	+1
New courts												
Special Criminal Court (national)												
14	President				None		1	0	1	100	0	0
15	Attorney-General				None		1	0	1	100	0	0
16	Advocates-General				None		7	0	7	100	0	0
17	Vice-presidents				None		6	3	9	66.667	33.333	0
18	Examining magistrates				None							
Administrative tribunals (Regions)												
19					None		7	3	10	70	30	0

Source: MINJUSTICE