

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix – Travail – Patrie

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace – Work – Fatherland

INITIAL REPORT

**ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER
ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD**

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

IGA :	Income-generating Activity
WAPES :	World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES)
ANAC :	Cameroon National Association of the Blind
ARV :	Antiretroviral
ASSEJA :	Association for Children, Youth and the Future
AVH :	Valentine Haüy Association
ACRWC :	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CASPCAN :	Cameroon Society against Child Abuse and Neglect
ECCAS :	Economic Community of Central African States
CEDAW :	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFC :	Crédit Foncier du Cameroun
CIEE :	Centre d'Information, d'Education et d'Ecoute
CNCT :	National Consultative Commission on Labour
CNLD :	National Committee for the Fight against Drugs
CNPS :	National Social Contingency Fund
CNRPH :	Cardinal Leger Centre for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons
CNSST :	National Commission for Health and Safety at Work
COCADE :	Cameroonian Coalition of NGOs for the Rights of the Child
COMJ :	Children and youth municipal councils
CONRHA :	National Committee for the Rehabilitation and Socio-economic Reintegration of persons with disability
CPFF :	Centre for the Advancement of Women and the Family
CRETE :	Centre for Research and Studies in Economics and Surveys
BTC:	Belgian Technical Cooperation
PRSP :	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ECOSOC :	Economic and Social Council
FCFA :	Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community)
NEF :	National Employment Fund
UNFPA :	United Nations Population Fund
HACI :	Hope for African Children Initiative
IAI :	African Institute of Computer Science
INJS :	National Institute of Youth and Sports
IEC :	Information – Education – Communication
IPEC :	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
STI :	Sexually Transmitted Infections
LUTRENA :	Fight against Child Labour in West and Central Africa (project)
MAETUR :	Mission for the development of Urban and Rural Lands
MINAS :	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINATD :	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation
MINEFOP :	Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training
MINESEC :	Ministry of Secondary Education

MINESUP :	Ministry of Higher Education
MINJEUN :	Ministry of Youth
MINJUSTICE :	Ministry of Justice
MINPROFF :	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family
MINSANTE :	Ministry of Public health
MINSEP :	Ministry of Sports and Physical Education
MINTP :	Ministry of Public Works
MINTSS :	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
NEPAD :	New Programme for African Development
ICT :	Information and Communications Technology
OVC :	HIV/AIDS orphans and vulnerable children
ILO :	International Labour Organisation
MDG :	Millennium Development Goals
ONACAM :	National Office of War Veterans
ONEFOP :	National Observatory on Employment and Vocational Training
NGO :	Non-Governmental Organization
UNO :	United Nations Organization
UNAIDS :	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
PADER :	Support Programme for the Development of Rural Employment
PADY :	Yaoundé Sanitation Programme
PAIRPEV :	Support Programme for the Integration and Reintegration of Vulnerable Persons
PAJE :	Support for Young Entrepreneurs
PAJERU :	Support Programme for Rural and Urban Youths
PAMOFPE :	Programme to Improve Vocational Training Supply for Employment
PASIJEF :	Programme d'Appui à la Stabilisation et à l'Intégration de la Jeunesse Frontalière
PANEJ :	National Action Plan for Youth Employment
IMCI :	Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses
PDA :	Participation and Development of Adolescents
PED :	Graduate Employment Programme
PEV :	Expanded Vaccination Programme
PEJ :	Youth Employment Programme
PIAASI :	Integrated Support Programme for Informal Sector Actors
PIFMAS :	Programme for youth socio-economic integration through the manufacture of sport equipment
SME/SMI :	Small and Medium Scale Enterprise / Small and Medium Scale Industry
PN2R :	National Programme for Construction and Rehabilitation of Rural Roads
PNS-OEV :	National Support Programme for Orphans and Children Made Vulnerable by HIV
UNDP :	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC :	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
PPAV :	Plan for Indigenous and Vulnerable Peoples
HHIPC :	Highly Indebted Poor Country
PMTCT :	Preventing Mother-to-Child Transmission
PRONAIS :	National Youth Integration Support Programme
PLWA :	Persons Living with HIV/ADS

RGPH :	General Census for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Persons with Disability
SIC :	Real Estate Company of Cameroon
AIDS :	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
SIGIPES :	Integrated Computerized State Personnel and Payroll Management System
SSDS :	Social Sector Development Strategy
SPEE :	Private Child Care Institutions
HSS :	Health Sector Strategy
TGI :	Court of First Instance
ICT :	Information and Communications Technology
AU:	African Union
UNESCO :	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF :	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
HIV :	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
WACAP :	West African Cocoa/Agriculture Programme
YES:	Youth Employment Summit

INTRODUCTION

An issue of prime concern to the Cameroonian Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya, is child and youth protection. It is one of Government's priority actions, with at least nine ministerial departments assigned specifically to address the issue of protection and promotion of the rights of every child.

Against this backdrop, Cameroon has ratified nearly all relevant legal instruments, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (5 June 1997).

Following ratification, Member States are expected to submit the reports on the measures taken to the African Union's Bureau of the Committee of Experts, to give effect to the provisions of the Charter, and on the progress made in the exercise of these rights.

This initial report on Cameroon outlines the legislative, administrative judiciary and other measures taken to give effect to the provisions of this legal instrument.

The following are the relevant provisions prescribed by the committee of African experts:

- General information on Cameroon
- General implementation measures
- Definition of the child
- General principles
- Civil rights and freedoms
- Family environment and foster care
- Basic health and welfare
- Education, leisure and cultural activities
- Special protection measures
- Responsibilities of the child

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON CAMEROON

A. Territory and Population

Situated in Africa in the region of the Gulf of Guinea, Cameroon is bordered to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo, to the east by the Central African Republic, to the north-east by the Republic of Chad, to the west by the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to the south-west by Atlantic Ocean, along a 400-kilometre coastline. The country is triangular in shape and covers an area of 475 444 square kilometres, with a population of 18 million inhabitants, based on the country's 2005 population census. The population is essentially young, with about 50 per cent under 20 years old.

The country was first under French rule in 1919 and then came under British rule in 1946. It has a pluralistic legal system which recognizes a Romano-Germanic legal system alongside the Common Law and customary rights systems.

Cameroon is a miniature Africa, and is home to the variety of ecological systems found all over the African continent. These are three major bioclimatic systems, namely:

- The equatorial areas with four seasons; over 1,500 millimetres of rainfall, average temperature of 25 per cent and thermal amplitude of 2 degrees Celsius. This area covers almost the entire south of the country, including the coast and the mountainous regions of the west.
- This humid tropical climate has 300 to 1,500 millilitres of rainfall per annum. The average temperature is 28 degrees Celsius and the thermal gap is 6 degrees Celsius. The vegetation in this Sudan climate is made up of large areas of wooded savannah, covering the North, East, South and the entire Adamaoua province.
- The dry tropical area, with a sudan-sahelian climate, strongly influenced by the continentality, with 300 to 900 ml of annual precipitation; an average temperature of 28 degrees Celsius and 707 degrees thermal amplitude. Severe weather conditions characterize this sahelian and desert climate of the Sudan area. This area covers a large portion of the North and Far North.

The country has year-round waterways, some of which take their source from up country and flow to the ocean. This is an important socio-economic asset for the country.

The ecological and climatic diversities condition the way of life of the people and their methods of child supervision.

Cameroon has nearly 230 tribes falling under four main socio-cultural groups. These are the Bantus, the Bantoids or semi-Bantus, the Sudanese and the pygmies. Far from being a source of conflict or obstacle to peaceful cohabitation, this ethnic diversity is rather a factor of advancement for the people, as a result of unflinching support from Government and the efforts of the people themselves. Peace within the country and with the neighbours is one of the foundations on which the nation is built; with the citizen's right at the centre of the development process. Herein lies Cameroon's membership of the world movement for children, aimed at building a world worthy of children in the third millennium. Cameroon has also acceded to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and participates actively in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The number of foreigners living in Cameroon is estimated at about three per cent of the total population. They live together peacefully with the local population. This makes Cameroon a traditionally hospitable African country.

Cameroon's economy is essentially primary and rural, as it is based on agriculture and livestock rearing, which contributes to over 21 per cent (CRN periodic report) of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs 73 per cent of the working population. However, most of the country's produce is marketed in the raw form, without processing and value added. This has led to a budding secondary sector that employs 6.3 per cent of the population and 34 per cent of GDP. The sector has undergone some upheavals lately with the liberalization of global markets and the ensuing competition; the stiff conditionalities attached to foreign capital. Another issue is inadequate energy supply. Youth unemployment, especially, has thus become one of the major social problems facing the country. Unemployment affects 17 to 25 per cent of the population, and even as high as 33 per cent of the population in urban areas. The country also faces many other social problems as a result of children living or working in the streets (15 to 20,000 in the major cities), economically or sexually exploited children, prostitution, and all forms of trafficking of and trade in women and children. Child labor affects about 27 per cent of children aged five to 17 years (INS, Study on child labour in Cameroon).

The public authorities have however been making sustained efforts to improve the general economy of the country and the macroeconomic indicators, starting with control of public expenditure. On 13 October 2002, the country reached decision point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and completion point in April 2006. This led straight away to the implementation of measures to reduce 90 per cent of the country's debt and reschedule official development assistance over 40 years with 16 years' grace period. The positive fallout of the completion point is periodically used for social investments such as construction of classrooms, health centres, hospitals and roads. These are all beneficial to the rights of children and the welfare of the people. A great era of hope has thus dawned on the country.

Life expectancy in Cameroon varies greatly according to gender - 59 years for women (59 per cent of the population) and 54.5 for men.

According to the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), four out of 10 Cameroonians live below the poverty line (less than a dollar a day). This updated strategy paper takes into account the complexity of the social problems and the new possibilities offered by multilateral and bilateral debt relief.

Cameroon is a secular State, which guarantees religious freedoms (Preamble of the country's Constitution, Act 96-06 of 18 January 1996 on the revised Constitution of 2 June 1972). The largest religious groups are Catholics, Protestants and Muslims. There is also a large proportion of so-called "awakened" groups, made up of Pentecostals. However, many Cameroonians practise ancestral worship.

B. Political Structure

Cameroon is a Unitary Republic with a semi-presidential regime and power separation between the executive, legislature and judiciary.

- The President of the Republic and Head of State is head of the executive. He is elected by the country by direct universal suffrage for a term of seven years. He symbolizes national unity. He sees to compliance with the constitution and the republican institutions; he defines the nation's policy, appoints government and the various functions of sovereignty; he sees to arbitration to ensure harmonious functioning of the organs of State. He is the guarantor of national independence and the nation's integrity; he ensures the continuity and permanence of the State, compliance with treaties, conventions and international agreements ratified and signed by Cameroon.
- Per article 14 of Act 96-06 of 18 January 1996 on the revision of the 1972 constitution, the two houses of Parliament, the National Assembly and Senate, shall exercise legislative power. Act 2004/017 of 22 July 2004 on orientation and decentralization is a clear step toward the establishment of institutions set up by the constitution.
- Justice is rendered by the country on behalf of the Cameroonian people. The Supreme Court, the courts of appeal and tribunals exercise judicial power. The judiciary is independent of the legislature and executive (cf. Article 37 of the Constitution).

The administrative system is broken down into central government, the de-concentrated authorities and decentralized authorities. Under article 55 of the Constitution, the decentralized territorial authorities are the regions and municipalities and per decree

2008/377 of 12 November 2008 on the administrative organization of the Republic of Cameroon. The process of transforming the provinces into regions started gaining ground with the decentralization act of 9 July 2004.

C. Policies and Programmes

In Cameroon, the issue of the status of children is part and parcel of overall social development policy. The strategies stemming from the Government's policy aim at:

- Improving the legal and institutional framework of child protection;
- Building stakeholder capacities;
- Improving knowledge on the status of children;
- Advocacy for taking children's rights into account in sectoral policy;
- Formulating strategies for full and harmonious development of children
- Reintegrating children in difficulty into families and schools;
- Social and vocational reintegration;
- Planning activities on combating child right violations;
- Raising awareness and mobilizing communities about child labour issues;
- Improving and enhancing legislation on
- Coordinating and monitoring activities on combating child trafficking.

These major strategic areas were taken into account in the draft action plan on combating child labour, whose main obstacle is the lack of finances.

In terms of technical cooperation and international assistance, Cameroon is in cooperation with:

- The French Cooperation, with the Bi-Multi-OEV project
- The Belgian Cooperation, under the Baka Economic and Social Development Support Project (PADES/Baka)
- The Japanese Cooperation, in the basic education sector
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as part of the national youth policy
- The International Labour Organization (ILO), for the implementation of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, for issues such as care for orphans and vulnerable children.

Furthermore, a Cameroon/UNICEF cooperation programme on "Child Protection" is currently underway. It has two components, one on the legal and institutional framework and the other on special protection. These projects help in providing access by children, especially those vulnerable to violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination to appropriate legal and protection services.

Lastly, Cameroon has developed cooperation with international non-governmental organizations such as Plan Cameroon for child-centred community development, SOS Kinderdorf for care of orphans in the Children's Villages, HACI, OSIWA and Care Cameroon.

D. General Legal Framework for Protection of Human Rights

The country has a raft of protocols, charters, ratified international conventions, national laws and regulations that govern human rights protection in general, and those of the child in particular. These ratified international instruments supersede the national instruments.

The preamble of Act 96-06 of 18 January 1996 on the revision of the 2 June 1972 constitution states that the human being, without distinction of race, religion, sex or belief has sacred inalienable rights. Furthermore, Cameroon is committed to the basic freedoms set forth in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and all relevant ratified international conventions.

Cameroon is also party to the following international instruments:

- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1997);
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1993);
- ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment;
- ILO Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst forms of Discrimination Against Women, acceded to by the country on 4 December 2004;
- United Nations additional protocol of 15 November 2000 against organized transnational crime; its protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, especially children; Cameroon ratified this protocol per decree of 18 November 2004;
- Ratification of the resolutions of the 11th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, 1995 in Cairo, Egypt, on the prevention of organized sex tourism;

National legislation includes:

- Act 2004/16 of 22 July 2004, on the establishment, organization and functioning of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, to make that body independent, more operational and efficient;
- Act 92/04 of 14 April 1992 on school orientation, which sets the compulsory school-going age at 14 years;
- Act 67-LF-1 of 12 June 1967 on the penal code and all punishments for violations against children and moral practices;
- Act 2005/007 of 27 July 2005 on the criminal procedure code, which took effect on 1 January 2007;
- Act 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 on combating slavery and child trafficking in Cameroon;
- Tourism act 98/006 of 14 April 1998, setting out the general provisions for practising this activity.

E. Information and Publicity

Cameroon has a government gazette in which all legislative and regulatory acts are published in English and in French. With the wave of liberalization, several media houses have sprouted in the country. Social communication act 90/052 of 19 December 1990 supervises this sector, which regularly informs citizens about their rights and on social issues related to their rights and abuse thereof. Several FM stations - about 15 in Yaounde alone - broadcast daily on issues of child rights to inform the relevant administrations and institutions that promote child rights issues.

The country regularly organizes seminars and workshops for magistrates, social sector workers, the police, prison officers, health workers and teachers as well as for civil society organizations on human rights, the rights of children, handicapped persons, the aged and women.

As was done with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, published in 5,000 copies in simplified language, NGOs and other associations have offered to produce shortly, national legal texts on the rights of the child in the local languages.

Faith-based organizations are involved in the promotion of rights. However, high illiteracy among the population and the land-locked nature of some regions impede propagation of the issue of the rights of the child.

II. GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Cameroon has methodically pursued efforts to ensure an enabling environment for the development of the child, through:

A. Legislative and Regulatory Measures

Per the recommendations of the committee on the rights of the child, and in light of the specific circumstances of the country, over the period under review, Cameroon adopted legislative and regulatory measures on the rights of the child and embarked on procedures, which are now far advanced, to introduce others. The measures are as follows:

- Adoption of act 06 of 18 January 1996 on the revision of the preamble of the 2 June 1972 Constitution, which guarantees the freedom and security of every individual, with special focus on the protection of children and the youth;
- Adoption of act 67-LF-1 of 12 June 1967 on the institution of the Penal Code, which has provisions that can be invoked to punish child labor cases. These are sections 292 on forced labour; 293 on slavery; 294 on proxenitism; 342 on slavery and pledging; 343 on prostitution; 344 on corrupting the youth; 345 on moral danger; 349 on blackmail or exploitation of weakness; 352 and 353 on child abduction; 355 on representation of minors, 358 on abandonment of household;
- Adoption of act 92/007 of 14 August 1992 which sets the minimum age of admission to employment at 14 (article 86) and bans the employment of children in dangerous work or work beyond their strength (section 87);
- Adoption of act 97/12 of 10 January 1997 setting entry, stay and exit conditions for foreign nationals in Cameroon, and its implementing decree 200/286 of 12 October 2000, which requires prior parental authorization for children to be issued a travel document;
- Adoption of act 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 on combating slavery and child trafficking
- Ongoing finalization and adoption of the Child Protection Code will contribute to ensuring better protection for children against risks such as work, trafficking, trade and exploitation and all forms of abuse and violence, by way of specific punishment, regulating delegation of parental authorization and setting up specific mechanism for psychosocial care and social reintegration of child victims.

- Adoption of act 98/004 of 14 April 1998 on guidelines for education in Cameroon, whose article 7 stipulates: “the State shall guarantee the child’s right to education, without distinction of gender, political opinion, philosophy, or religious persuasion, and of social, linguistic or geographical origin”;
- Adoption of child trafficking and antislavery act 2005/015 of 29/12/2005;
- Adoption of procedural code 2005/007/ of 27 July 2005, which entered into force on 1 January 2007;
- Decree 2004/320 of 8 December 2004 on institution by Government of several ministerial departments responsible for the rights of the child. These include the Ministry of Social Affairs (promotion of rights and social protection of the child); the Ministry of Basic Education (pre-school and primary); Ministry of Secondary Education (technical and general education); Ministry of Public Health (maternal and child health); Ministry of Women’s promotion and Family Affairs (education on responsible parenthood and family welfare); Ministry of Youth (promotion of leisure and extra-curricular activities), etc.;
- Finalization of the persons and family bill;
- Adoption prior to the preliminary draft code on child protection, harmonizing various domestic legal systems with ratified international instruments.

B. Other Measures

Apart from the legal framework described above, both the Government of Cameroon and its partners have undertaken the following actions:

- Adoption of a cooperation convention for another five-year (2008-2012) plan between Cameroon and UNICEF. The plan comprises five major programmes (basic education, child survival, child protection, social and partner policies, children and HIV/AIDS). The programme is built according to the rights approach and takes into account age cohorts. Ultimately, it will contribute to “creating an environment in which the rights of children to survival, development protection and participation are ensured”. The master plan of operations (MPO) for the plan was signed on 5 November 2002;
- Adoption of act 97/009 of 10 January 1997 on combating torture;
- Decree 2001/041 of 19 February 2001 on the organization of public schools and setting forth the duties of school officers, whose article 47 provides for the

exemption of annual contributions charged public primary school pupils, to give effect to the 10 February 2000 presidential decision on free primary education;

- Decree 2001/109/PM of 20 March 2001 on the organization and functioning of public institutions that supervise minors and rehabilitate social misfits;
- Decree 2009/301/PM of 23 February 2009 on the creation, organization and functioning of the Bepanda centre for minors;
- Signing of a circular on the organization of the practical modalities for supplying public primary schools with the “minimum package” teaching materials;
- Joint decrees of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Secondary Education on free admission of handicapped children and those born of poor handicapped parents, into public secondary schools;
- Circular 38/B1/1464 of 8 December 2000 on combating violence in schools;
- Circular 10/B1/ of 13 May 2002 on the state of violence and vandalism in schools
- Circular 005/B1/1464 of 13 February 2002 on combating occult practices in schools;
- Circular 006/B1/1464 of 4 March 2002 on secular nature of public schools;
- Development of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), whose memorandum of understanding between Cameroon, represented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MINTSS) and ILO, was signed on 22 October 2004. Two specific child labour control projects were carried out from 2004 to 2005.

The West Africa Cocoa Agriculture Project (WACAP), and the LUTRENA project on combating child trafficking.

The second project led to an exploratory study, which, based on the characteristics of trafficking, established the emergence of the phenomenon in Cameroon’s North West, East, Far North and South provinces. At the same time as a specific law was being drafted, a direct cooperation, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs, ILO, NKUMU Fed-Fed and the ETA associations led to the rehabilitation of 103 child trafficking victims in the North-West and Centre provinces. With regard to the North-West, 70 children, including 33 girls, were taken into the Gwan Multipurpose Centre in Bali Nyonga, a few kilometres

from Bamenda. In addition to the psychosocial assistance given, each of the children was trained in a trade, while the parents were sought and taken care of by the projects, in view of the establishment of a private charity institution. The children were then rehabilitated. Sixty rural communicators were trained in child slavery and trafficking modules. The United States embassy and parent and children cooperatives and clubs supported the training programme. The programme is aimed at sustaining the gains made and curbing the development of child trafficking in the areas concerned;

- The joint MINAS/Belgian Red Cross project carried out in 2003 for the social reintegration of street children in Yaounde, ended in 2005. The project helped to reach nearly 15,000 children through various activities, and reintegrate 480 of them;
- Under the multilateral debt reduction, project implemented to combat the issue of street children in 2008. One of the intermediate objectives of this project is the processing and prevention of sexual exploitation and other forms of violation of the rights of children and adolescents in the Centre and coastal regions, which led to the identification of 465 of these children, 112 of whom have been reunited with their families;
- Cameroon-Japan cooperation to increase basic schools;
- Chantal BIYA/EDICEF cooperation Foundation, which built and equipped schools and restored five primary schools back to the State;
- Involvement of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in identifying and caring for orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (orphans and vulnerable children). This activity was undertaken under the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs, together with the national AIDS control committee. The committee's programme aims to ensure access by 300,000 orphans and vulnerable children to basic social services by 2010;
- France/UNICEF/Cameroon cooperation, under the "Bi-Multi" project which aims to provide care for orphans and vulnerable children;
- MINAS/Belgian technical cooperation (PADESS-BAKA) for management of pygmies, including child pygmies in Djoum, Mintom and Oveng in the South Region, which, on completion, had contributed to improving access to citizenship procedures for BAKA children (467 children received birth certificates) and child morbidity control through the vaccination of 645 pregnant women;

- Cameroon/Plan International partnership in the area of child rights (5,000 birth certificates issued in 2005, water supply facilities built), education (several classrooms built and equipped), health (health promotion) and community and capacity building and agriculture;
- Increased involvement of civil society organizations in child advocacy and supervision. These include the Chantal Biya Foundation, African Synergies for AIDS control and human suffering, UNHABITAT, ASSEJA, COCADE, EIP, DET, ACAFAS, AGIR and Emmanuel Cameroon. Also, involvement of local decentralized authorities, including the street children project carried out by the Douala IVeme city council in partnership with the Strasbourg city council;
- Signing of an agreement between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Italian NGO, AIAS D'AFRAGOLA, for the construction of a rehabilitation centre for handicapped persons at Maroua. This will contribute to improving technical facilities for testing and treating handicaps among children;
- Introduction of child rights issues in religious talks and sermons (apostolic letter dated 9 October 2005 sent by Monsignor Paul Verdzekov, Archbishop of Bamenda, to all Christians about child trafficking; FEMEC training seminar for the church, on child rights at Kribi in July 2004; advocacy in August 2005 for adoption of specific legislation against slave trade, raising awareness of listeners during broadcasts by Catholics, protestants and Muslims on CRTV, Canal 2 international, STV 2 and faith-based radio networks); memorandum by the national secretary for private Islamic education making Islamic pre and primary schools free in the northern region, to combat endemic under-enrollment in the region. In Cameroon, faith-based schools are open to all children without discrimination;
- Significant increase in public budget allocations to administrations in charge of carrying out child rights, namely Ministry of Urban Planning (MINEDUB), Ministry of Security (MINESEC), Ministry of Social Affairs, (MINAS), Ministry of Youth (MINJEUN), and Ministry of Health (MINSANTE);
- Systematic formulation of ministerial and sectoral strategies, including social development, to improve planning of activities and allocation of resources needed to improve the living conditions of the people, especially children and other vulnerable persons;
- Development of several programmes and projects PCIME, PNLs, PNLp, PPCOEV (Global Fund and Bi Multi), PEC (LUTRENA and WACAP), Cameroon-UNICEF Cooperation 2003-2007;

- Finalizing the framework document of the national policy on comprehensive care plan for children (DCPN/DIJE).

C. Measures to Disseminate the Children's Charter

Per the directives of point 9 (a) and (b) of the African Committee of experts, Cameroon has embarked on the following activities aimed raising awareness about the principles and provisions set forth in the children's charter and arousing social mobilization.

- Awareness campaigns on the rights of the child, at ceremonies of the Day of the African Child (16 June), national youth festivals (11 February) and several other events;
- Ten children's parliament sessions, and training junior members of parliament in the rights and duties of children, and distributing materials;
- Capacity building of officers in public and private child supervision institutions using child protection documents such as the Children's Charter;
- 15,000 comic strips on the charter distributed to children at schools and other areas during awareness campaigns;
- Posters and flyers to raise awareness about the violation of child rights. Some of the posters were produced with support from Plan Cameroon and MINESEC ;
- Several annual radio and television events for children, on popularization and promotion of child rights;
- Gradual integration of human rights and child education modules into school curricula (citizenship education; higher specialized diploma (DESS) in human rights at the University of Dschang, targeted training in human rights at the Universite Catholique d'Afrique Centrale (UCAC) and specialty course at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC);
- Translation of the children's charter into local languages is challenged by the sheer number of languages and illiteracy.

D. Obstacles

Constraints with the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in Cameroon are as follows:

- Lack of coordination of sectoral child care policies;

- The economic recession, coupled with a slowdown in the State's activities and its harmful effect on budgets allocated to social services, especially for children;
- Traditions and customs that deter the realization of the rights and welfare of children;
- Worsening HIV/AIDS pandemic, which increases mortality of parents and the number of orphans and vulnerable children.

III - DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

A. Concept of the Child

Cameroon has subscribed to the definition of the child as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To this end, the child is defined as "any human being aged under 18".

Ongoing reform of legislation (draft code on persons and the family and preliminary draft child protection code) is aimed at standardizing the age of children for all aspects of life and has made a significant step in defining the child as "any human being aged under 18".

B. Consent to Marriage

Marriage in Cameroon is founded on the free will by a man and woman to join together as husband and wife. Free and solemn consent to marriage is therefore essential to the validity of marriage. Such consent is one of the major items mentioned in the marriage certificate. Paragraph 4, article 52 of marriage ordinance 81/02 of 28 June 1981 stipulates that "No marriage can be celebrated unless the future couple has consented to it". Cameroon's legislation is emphatic about the importance of consent to marriage to demonstrate its firm opposition to forced marriage. Recognizing marriage as a form of emancipation of the child, the provisions set forth in title VI, chapter III of the above ordinance, carefully stipulates consent by parent(s), guardians or religious leaders for child marriages (15 years for girls and 18 for boys).

This legal instrument, adopted in 1981 prior to ratification of the children's charter, is under amendment. The possibility of child marriage and parental consent are absent from the draft child protection code. Consent to marriage, which is still part of the prerogatives of "parental power", along with the concept of "parental authority over the person of the child" (Book I, Title IV), will thus disappear with the promulgation of the code on the protection of children. Parental authority is defined as "a set of rights and duties conferred on the father and mother in the interest of the child". The father and the mother have

parental authority until the child reaches the age of majority or is declared to be of full age, the aim being to ensure the child's safety, health, morals, education and harmonious development. The only rights and duties which parents have are those of care, supervision and education. Thus, the preliminary draft code on the protection of children, simply by prohibiting the marriage of children, automatically abolishes the right of parents to consent to such marriages.

While the draft child protection code attempts to harmonize national legislation with international instruments, it glosses over the existence early sex, which must be addressed. This is becoming a major problem, with commercials stressing condom use or remaining faithful as a means of preventing HIV/AIDS. This has caused sexual depravation and immorality among the youth, who shun early marriage.

C. Minimum Age of Access to Employment

Article 14, of Labour Code act 92/007 of 14 August 1992, which sets the minimum age for admission to employment at 14, implies that children ought to be in school until this age. In Cameroon, no person under 17 can be enrolled in the armed forces. However, there is still a category of age in which persons do not have a legal status and face a dilemma, because by law, they are children up to 18 years of age and adults as from 20 or 21 years of age. Thus, they need a legal status, which might be obtained through "ipso facto empowerment".

D. Access to Education

The preamble to the Constitution of 18 January 1996 declares that the State shall guarantee the child's right to education, that primary education shall be compulsory and that the organization and supervision of education at all levels shall be the bounden duty of the State.

Article 47 public schools decree 2001/041 of 19 February 2001 setting the duties and responsibilities of school administration provides for free public primary education, as decided by the President of the Republic on 10 February 2000.

Each year sees the establishment and opening of all manner of schools and educational institutions, in a bid to meet the ever-increasing demand. Many development partners, including the African Development Bank, EDICEF, the Japanese government and even civil society organizations, are all involved in education in Cameroon. Constant efforts are made at quality improvement through governance (four ministerial departments are responsible for education and training - MINEDUB, MINESEC, MINEFOP and MINESUP); frequent implementation of monitoring, control and supervisory bodies; training of trainers and teachers at teachers training colleges; gradual recruitment of 1,700 part-time teachers into the public service yearly; making education more occupationally

relevant in order to promote new talent and help ensure that skills taught in the educational system are consistent with the requirements of the labour market.

E. Consulting a Physician

To date, parental authorization is not required for medical consultation by a child. On the contrary, the department of health, child rights institutions and the entire social set up of the country encourage access by all to medical care.

Regarded as one of the priority social sectors, healthcare in general, and women and children's health in particular, are high on the policy agenda. Access by children to medical consultation and quality health care is an indicator of development and public welfare. The State has therefore been allocating increasing resources to improve the health system and access by all people to quality care:

- Framework law on public health adopted;
- Health map prepared and has near universal coverage;
- Access too drugs facilitated for all, by way of public subsidies, multilateral support, hospital pharmacies and sale of generic drugs;
- Training of doctors and other health staff is ongoing. Once qualified, staff are transferred all over the country;
- Hospital consultation costs 600 CFAF. Children receive government financial assistance on a case-by-case basis, upon intervention of a social worker.

There are, however, a number of basic obstacles to full access to medical consultations by all persons: the large-scale departure of physicians and other specialists because of problems finding employment and poor pay in the public sector; and the insufficient quantity and quality of health-care personnel, infrastructures and equipment, making it difficult to provide all children with medical care. The cost of medicine remains inaccessible to many poor families.

Nevertheless, through the determination of decision makers, children are the main beneficiaries of all health-care programmes in Cameroon. Antiretroviral drugs are now free for all children up to age 15 living with AIDS.

IV - GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Non-discrimination (Articles 3, 26)

The principle of non-discrimination as an inherent right is provided and guaranteed by the preamble of the Constitution. The Government implements it in all areas concerning children.

1. Education

According to prevailing laws, there is no age limit for enrollment in school by children, including refugee and handicapped children.

2. Protection and Social Security

Relevant laws include:

- Decree 2001/109/PM of 20 March 2001, on the organization and functioning of public institutions for rehabilitating the socially handicapped. This law provides for the establishment of shelters, observation, transit and dwelling centres. Cameroon currently has 11 centres countrywide. These include: the Institutions Camerounaises de l'Enfance de Maroua et Bétamba, the Douala shelter and observation centre; the Garoua and Yaounde centre for children in distress; the Rehabilitation Institute of the Blind, the Borstal Institute of Buea, the Yaounde street children shelter and rehabilitation centre, the Bepanda centre for rehabilitation of minors and Home Ateliers de Bali in Douala ;
- Decree 2001/110/PM of 20 March 2001, on the organization and functioning of public early childhood care institutions;
- Circular 2002/9062/ DAPG of 15 October 2002 on legal procedures for crime perpetrators who are minors, under the common law system;
- Decree 2005/160 on the organization of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which assigns a whole department to child protection, with a division for the promotion of the rights of the child and another for safeguarding the child. 8 December 2004 on government reorganization, the family promotion division was converted into the directorate for the social protection of children. This separation shows the willingness of Government to give due recognition to child rights issues, and ensure protection for children. Furthermore, setting up a division for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child is in line with Government's commitment to ensuring the full development of the child, by focusing on his rights. The Government's intention is not to split up child issues, but rather to

enable each of the administrations concerned to fully play its role. The framework document under draft on the national policy on the full development of the young child (DCPN/DIJE) is part of this effort. The need to introduce the conditions to ensure harmonious development of the social, health and educational rights of the child cannot be overemphasized.

3) Rights of Vulnerable Groups

Legislation and programmes on the protection of vulnerable persons will be improved. A national solidarity forum was organized in June 2005 by the Ministry of Social Affairs; after which discussions were held with various administrative partners and civil society organizations to give effect to the recommendations adopted. Revision of the law on protection and promotion of handicapped persons is far advanced. Likewise, the project to formulate a policy on national solidarity has started. This reform will focus on:

- Assistance for poor and needy children;
- Health coverage;
- Support to special education for handicapped children;
- Support to re-adaptation and functional reeducation;
- Medical and social preventive measures

B. Best Interest of the Child (Article 4)

The persons and family bill on civil matters provides for:

- Assigning custody of the child to either parent, or placing him temporarily with a foster family in the event of marital crisis, following investigation by a competent social worker, taking into account, the best interest of the child;
- The social investigation will also take into account the resources of the parents in terms of providing a stipend for the upkeep of the children;
- The best interest of the child is taken into account for punitive, administrative and social issues.

The draft child protection code is designed to organize the exercise of parental authority on the child and maintaining his inheritance.

C. Right to Life, Survival and Development (Article 5)

The right to life is enshrined in the Constitution, whose preamble stipulates that “very person has a right to life, physical and moral integrity and humane treatment in all circumstances”. This is reflected in a set of penal, civil and social provisions:

1. School Health

Departments responsible for school health have been set up at the Ministry of Basic Education. At the Ministry of Secondary Education, medical inspections in all major towns of the provinces, dispensaries at schools with over 1,000 students and a controlled pharmacy for others.

2. Access to Health Services by Child Detainees

While the law provides for this, access to medical care for child detainees is inadequate. With overcrowding in cells and the paltry funds available for medical care for prisoners, additional support is needed. The same goes for children placed under supervision and rehabilitation in specialized institutions.

3. Health Coverage for Children in Need of Special Protection Measures

The cost recovery system is what underpins Cameroon’s health policy. All patients have to contribute to medical care, meaning that they themselves or people responsible for them pay for care. The budget of the Ministry of Social Affairs in charge of Social Protection of the Child is not enough to cover all costs. A few people are exempted after much negotiation and humanitarian considerations. This is not always convenient, especially for drugs not produced in Cameroon. There must be advocacy for increased budget for medical care.

However, some projects implemented for children in need of special protection measures do have health coverage, as with the national programme to support orphans and vulnerable children (PNS-OEV).

a. Access to Education by Detainees

However, minors placed in these correctional and social reintegration institutions do benefit from education and/or vocational training.

b. Living Conditions of Detainees

The dilapidated state and overcrowding of prisons hardly make them conducive for living. Families are however authorized to bring food to their detained family members to supplement prison rations.

Negotiations are ongoing with international organizations to meet the needs of child inmates. The plans entail creating separate quarters for minors, girls and boys within the prisons, building school blocks for the children and for vocational training, libraries, video libraries and playing areas. For Douala, the Bepanda shelter and observations centre will be turned into a pilot institution for children in need of special protection measures under one roof (orphans and vulnerable children, street children, children having fallen foul of the law, child trafficking victims). The project is supported by the UNICEF Special Protection Programme and will serve as yardstick for the entire Central African region, once it takes shape. However, funds should be mobilized for its implementation.

For now, child inmates in prisons such as the Yaounde Central Prison have leisure activities such as dancing, television, cinema, board games, sports and cultural events.

D. Respect for the Views of the Child (Article 7)

The preamble of Cameroon's Constitution stipulates the free expression of opinion by all citizens. Indeed, the Constitution states that "the freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, and of trade unionism, as well as the right to strike shall be guaranteed under the conditions fixed by law"

Cameroon continues to celebrate the Day of the Child each year to enable children to express their views on education, health, combating corruption and the problem of street children, during the Children's Parliament sessions.

Furthermore, 24 Information, education and crisis centres have been set up in schools, with the support of UNICEF, as part of the adolescent participation and development programme. Several health clubs have also been formed in primary and secondary schools to combat HIV/AIDS; "child-friendly and girl-friendly" pilot schools have also sprung up. Child governments and child and youth municipal councils (COMJ) have also been set up in Douala, Yaounde, Ngaoundéré and Bertoua, with the support of UNICEF.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

A. Name, Nationality, Identity and Birth Registration (Article 6)

1. Legal recognition of births

In addition to civil status ordinance 81/02 of 29 June 1981, the draft persons and family code on and the child protection code set forth legislation on declaration of births, which is an obligation for all parents or anyone with knowledge about the birth of a child. Traditional, religious and other opinion leaders have been sensitized to this effect.

For marginalized and under-privileged peoples like the Bororos, pygmies, and those of the mountain regions and border creek areas, the Government has been working over the last two years with international partners to register births. This is aimed at providing access to citizenship and school enrolment for children from these impoverished populations.

Following awareness campaigns carried out during the June 2003 edition of the Day of the African Child, to support the efforts of Government, in 2009, the UNICEF Special Protection Programme provided 150 birth registers, which were distributed in the Adamaoua and North regions, where birth registration was low.

Efforts have also been made to register all other children. In this regard, a programme is underway to register the marginal Mbororo, Baka, Bakola or pygmies in the Adamaoua, East and North-West provinces, with the support of UNICEF and the Plan Cameroon NGO.

This project was aimed at raising awareness to mobilize resource persons and issue over 20,000 birth certificates between 2000 and 2005.

2) Giving of Names

Per the provisions of relevant international instruments ratified by Cameroon, the persons and family code bill recognizes the right of every child to have a national identity right from birth. The elements making up the child's identity are his name, his age (date and place of birth) and names of parents.

Prior to its entry into force, this instrument is already applied, and all children living in Cameroon carry names that give them honour and dignity.

3) Nationality

There are several legal documents on the nationality of the child. However, it is the Family code bill that provides a major innovation, by considering as Cameroonian:

- A child, with at least one Cameroonian parent;
- A minor child adopted by a Cameroonian parent;
- A child born in Cameroon (subject to establishing that his parents are foreigners);

Cameroonian nationality can also be acquired by any person unable to avail himself of another nationality, by the mere fact of being born on Cameroonian soil.

4) Preservation of Identity

Article 12, of civil ordinance 81/02 of 29 June 1981, provides that “birth certificates should state the dates of the events, the date they happened, the given name, family name, profession, residence of the persons concerned”. These give indicators on the identity of the person.

In addition to the prevailing legal provisions, there are international NGOs such as Plan Cameroon and the Belgian Technical Cooperation, which support the Government in providing access to citizenship through campaigns on the national identity card. Under the programme, 5,000 pygmies in the East region were issued with identity cards with the help of Plan Cameroon.

B. Freedom of Expression, Thought, Conscience and Religion, Association and Peaceful Assembly (Articles 7, 8 and 9)

Cameroon is a secular State; and the various religions freely carry out their respective activities. Likewise, religious teaching and faith-based social work are authorized.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion. All citizens have the right to profess their faith or not to practice a religion, have the religious conviction of their choice and divulge their doctrine or conviction, provided they accord due respect to other religions. The child is taught to practise his parents’ religion.

Several changes have been observed in the activities and programmes aimed at enabling children to have access to appropriate information. This concerns oral communication and the proliferation of FM radio stations that broadcast programmes for

children and disseminate provisions of the Convention. For the school year 2004/05, CRTV launched educational programmes focusing on preparations for examinations for children in remote areas, where there are not enough teachers and specialized documents are inaccessible. It also has programmes for, and with the participation of, young people, such as “jeunesse parlons-en” (Young people, let’s talk about it). The press has special publications for young people which address educational themes, such as “100 % Jeune Programme” (100 per cent Youth Programme). Television stations also broadcast programmes and spots targeting children and adolescents.

The only negative point is the rampant use of internet by adolescents and the youth, who have access to all sorts of programmes.

C. Protection of Privacy (Article 10)

Protection of privacy for all is provided for and guaranteed by the Constitution. However, article 300 of the Cameroonian Penal Code, which punishes violations of the privacy of correspondence, gives parents, guardians or persons customarily responsible, the right to open and even to stop the correspondence of their children if they have not reached the age of majority.

D. Protection against Abuse and Maltreatment (Article 16)

Law enforcement officials, prison staff and judicial personnel have regularly attended training seminars in humanitarian law since 2004.

The Ministry of Education has rolled out teaching modules on combating all forms of violence. The law prohibits corporal punishment in schools. I

Studies are also under way on violence against children.

However, no measures have been taken to date to investigate cases of torture or abuse of children, to compensate and rehabilitate the victims or to set up a complaints mechanism. Cases are reported in an informal manner, and the State always takes action.

VI. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND FOSTER CARE

A. Parental Guidance and Parental Responsibilities (Article 20)

The preliminary draft code on persons and the family and that of the protection of children, which are under completion, will strengthen legislation on the family and on the protection of children within the family and community.

Modules on family life education and population, elaborated by the Ministry of Education, will be taught as from the beginning of the 2006 school year to accord greater attention to children's rights.

B. Separation from Parents (Articles 19, 3 and 25)

The preamble to the Constitution of 18 January 1996 states that "The State shall protect and promote the family, which is the natural foundation of human society". Cameroon's social policy is essentially based on protection of the family. Everyone has the right to have a family and to develop within it.

In that connection, article 8 of the preliminary draft code on the protection of children provides that, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the international legal instruments ratified by Cameroon, all children have the right not to be separated against their will from their parents and family.

Apart from the traditional practice of "confiage", in which, for various reasons and in the interest of the child, children are temporarily cared for by a close relative, friend or relation, Cameroonian children are officially separated from their parents only in order to punish an offence or to place them in a care or rehabilitation facility.

These two measures are decided by a judge, acting in conformity with the provisions of articles 700 onward of the Penal Code. A social worker is always consulted.

An additional effort was made per Act 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 to introduce legislation in response to the growing number of cases of children who are victims of trafficking and are thus illegally separated from their parents. Perpetrators of such acts are now severely punished, and the State, with the participation civil society organizations is taking steps to identify, care for and protect such children in shelters, pending their social reintegration.

Setting up and operating these institutions would require support, while the above 2005 act should be disseminated and action plans formulated.

C. Reunification of the Family and Children Deprived of Family Environment (Articles 25 and 18)

Cameroon retains the right to guarantee the protection of all children in the family. All policies, programmes and projects on the special protection of children are designed to ensure that children remain in their families or are returned to them.

Civil status ordinance 81/02 contains provisions on the determination and recognition of paternity and punishes the abandonment of a child by a parent by imposing the payment of maintenance allowance.

Social centres attempt to settle marital and domestic conflicts as part of their assistance to individuals and families. In so doing, they ensure the preservation of family unity and the functioning of the family system. Special attention is given to cases in which children would suffer psychological and emotional distress from the break-up of the family unit.

The preliminary draft code on persons and the family and the preliminary draft code on the protection of children provide for equal inheritance rights for legitimate children and those born out of wedlock.

Illicit transfer and/or non-return are severely punished. This applies to slavery and trafficking, for which legislation was enacted on 29 December 2005.

D. Child Maintenance (Article 18)

As mentioned previously, a parent who abandons his family or loses a divorce case shall pay maintenance allowance for the children to be put in the custody of the other parent or a specialized institution.

Ignorance of this arrangement and of procedures for the recovery of maintenance allowance is the primary obstacle to making this child protection measure effective. The relevant administrative bodies and civil society organizations have been working to disseminate information in that regard. Legal handbooks published by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Family are simply worded and contain practical details on such topics as marriage, divorce, child maintenance, labour contracts and inheritance. Field workers, who serve as the local arm of the Ministry in rural areas, have used these handbooks for outreach, awareness and functional literacy initiatives for women and communities in order to encourage women, the main victims of family abandonment, to turn to the courts.

NGOs and women's associations have been supporting the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Family in this activity, focusing on practical aspects and efforts to resolve pending cases, in order to give effect to the initiative from which all 10 provinces of the country have benefited.

However, child maintenance has encountered two major obstacles:

- Payment proportional to the needs of the child. Maintenance is usually understated and does not cover basic needs (food, health care, housing, costs

of schooling, etc.). It is even lower when a large number of children are recipients.

- Recovery procedures. Although it is relatively easy to recover maintenance payments from a parent who earns a salary, by recovering from source, it is more cumbersome when the parent works in the rural sector. Current legal provisions stipulate that maintenance is to be recovered by a bailiff. Unfortunately, poor women do not have the resources to pay the bailiff's fees.

E. Adoption and Periodic Assessment of Child Placement (Article 24)

1. Child Abandonment: a Growing Phenomenon

Child abandonment is a growing phenomenon in Cameroon. The problem is the result of uncontrolled sex among adolescents, parental irresponsibility and poverty against a backdrop of deteriorating ancestral ties of solidarity, which, in recent times, has worsened with the impact of HIV/AIDS and the problem of child trafficking and slavery.

Nearly 300,000 orphans and vulnerable children are at risk of finding themselves without support or a family because of HIV/AIDS and its stigma.

The public authorities, in conjunction with development partners (the Global Fund and Bi-Multi OEV) and participation of civil society organizations (Synergies Africaines, the Chantal Biya Foundation), are seeking solutions to the problem.

Current initiatives focus on identifying these children and ensuring that they have access to basic social services; but appropriate mechanisms must also guarantee their physical protection and provide for their integration.

Initiatives are planned for opening shelters like those in Yaoundé and Garoua, hostels and other facilities for children in distress. Financial support will be vital in this regard. The introduction of the status of "public welfare child" is also envisaged in order to define the conditions of eligibility for full adoption of such children.

2. Alternative Care Measures

Two types of alternative care are currently provided in Cameroon: interim alternative care and permanent alternative care, with periodic assessment and monitoring of the child placed in care.

(a) Interim Alternative Care

Interim care usually applies to an emergency situation in which a child's physical safety calls for an immediate response. In such cases, and in accordance with the provisions of Decree 109 of 20 March 2001, the departmental delegate for social affairs, acting on a report by the head of a shelter for children in distress or any other person concerned, places the child in such a facility on an interim basis. The centre replaces the parents of the child until the parents are found.

Although already operational in Yaoundé and Garoua, this measure awaits the establishment and opening of suitable facilities for it to be applicable countrywide. Insufficient budgeting from the Ministry of Social Affairs is the main obstacle to meeting this need, which is perceptible in Douala, Bafoussam, Maroua and Bertoua, to mention only a few.

Furthermore, the measure, which currently only targets infants and street children in Yaounde, must also address cases of children who are victims of slavery, trafficking, abuse and exploitation of various kinds and make provision for alternatives to the imprisonment of children having fallen foul of the law.

(b) Permanent Alternative Care (Adoption)

Adoption is the permanent form of alternative care in Cameroon. Basically, it seeks to address the problem of a person or family unable to have children, and that of a child with no parents.

Adoption is currently governed by a raft of laws, which draw on both national and international legal instruments. It exists in two forms: simple adoption (by mutual consent) and full adoption. In order to harmonize and modernize the legal framework, Cameroon has made adoption one of the main points to be included in the preliminary draft code on the protection of children, which aims to regulate both domestic and international adoption.

Advocacy will be carried out in future to promote ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption.

(c) Periodic Review of Child Placement

Pursuant to Decree 110/PM of 20 March 2001 on the organization and functioning of public institutions for assisting minors and rehabilitating juvenile social misfits, institutional placement is the subject of periodic review. The review takes place at meetings on education, case counselling or home counselling, to assess the development of the case in order to guide action to be taken or terminate a child's stay in an institution.

Medical examinations are systematically conducted upon admission and in the event of an epidemic, and are carried out on a case by case basis, depending on the child's ailment.

F. Abuse, Neglect), Exploitation, including Physical and Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Articles 16 and 27)

Cameroon has carried out studies on the sexual exploitation of children, child labour in the informal sector and trafficking in children.

These preliminary studies have confirmed that children in Cameroon are victims of such forms of violence. National plans of action to address the problem focus on prevention, assistance and reintegration. Further studies are also envisaged to gauge the extent of the phenomenon so as to identify areas in which it is most likely to occur.

A workshop held in Bandjoun in December 2005 formulated a code of conduct for stakeholders in child protection and guides on prevention of sexual exploitation of children. These would be used by children to enable them to protect themselves, by parents, to enable them to protect their children and by teachers, to enable them to prevent the phenomenon.

VII. BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

A. Survival and Development of the Child (Article 5)

The health and welfare of children is of prime concern to Cameroon's public authorities. While strides have been made in this area, major challenges still remain due to the high rate of neonatal and under-five mortality and the high percentage of women who die through childbirth, AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. This seriously undermines the survival and development of children. For poliomyelitis, however, remarkable progress has been made.

Implementation of the integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI) is ongoing, and aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality arising from infant diseases such as acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, malaria and malnutrition.

With the capacity building of the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) and free vaccines and syringes at public health facilities since 2003, the immunization coverage has improved.

In concrete terms:

- DTP3 immunization coverage increased by 43 percent in 2001 and 72 per cent in December 2004;
- Measles-related morbidity reduced by 90 per cent and mortality by 98 per cent;
- The goal to eradicate polio is getting closer. Indeed, Cameroon had recorded no wild polio cases since 1999 and achieved the eradication pre-certification standard in 2002, following three consecutive years with no cases notified. However, this process was abruptly interrupted in 2003 with two cases of wild polio virus that came in from a neighbouring country. This resurgence continued into 2004, with 13 new cases. However, efforts continue to be made to achieve total eradication.

New hepatitis B and yellow fever antigens were introduced into the EPI.

In terms of nutrition, a national programme has been adopted and will be implemented to improve the nutritional status of children. Children aged six to 59 months regularly receive vitamin A supplements. Cameroon has made remarkable progress toward elimination of iodine deficiency disorders by adopting universal salt iodization. This has helped to eliminate public health problems, and thereby preserving our children from such disorders. Over 90 per cent of households use iodized salt and the prevalence of goitre has reduced greatly.

A slight improvement was recorded in under-five mortality. From 150.7 per cent, it dropped to 142 per cent (UNICEF Report on the State of the World's Children in 2008). During the same period, the mortality rate of children under one dropped from 77 per cent to 74 per cent.

B. Children with Disabilities

1. Social Assistance

There are no reliable statistics on the exact number of disabled children in Cameroon. However, the general population census of 2005 took account of the category of disabled persons, and its results will provide data on their current situation. Public awareness campaigns on the problem of disabled persons have been conducted at community level. The situation of children with disabilities has witnessed the following developments since 2001:

- Act 83/013 of 21 July 1983 on protection of disabled persons is under review and near completion;

- Two meetings of the National Committee on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (CONRHA) were held in 2001 and 2003;
- The centre for rehabilitated young blind persons was opened in 2003;
- The Congress of the World Blind Union was held in 2004 in Yaoundé;
- School aids and vehicles were donated to students with disabilities;
- A second public centre for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities (CNRH) is under construction in the Far-North province, following signing in July 2004 of the partnership agreement with the Italian NGO AIAS AFRAGOLA;
- The action plan to serve as basis for the partnership agreement between Cameroon and EMMAUS Suisse (ALES), an international NGO, is being finalized;
- The Paul Emile Leger National Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (CNRPH) in Yaoundé and the Rehabilitation Institute for the Blind in Buea have been audited. Furthermore, a decree was taken to transform the CNRH into a CNRHPEL to improve the capacity and diversity activities of management of disabilities;
- Private promoters have been authorized to open special education institutions and have received operating subsidies;
- Young Cameroonians registered in national and foreign institutions have been granted a special education allowance, which usually serves to defray the costs of schooling and purchase artificial aids;
- Under decree 80/380 of 13 September 1980, the Rehabilitation Institute of Buea, whose mission is to ensure schooling and vocational training the blind and visually impaired, toward their socioeconomic reintegration;
- Decree 77/495 of 7 December 1977, on the conditions for setting up and operating private social charities, regulates schools and institutions for children with disabilities;
- Decree 90/1516 of 26 November 1990 establishing the modalities for the implementation of law 83/013 of 21 July 1983 on the protection of persons with disabilities, which contains provisions on educational assistance to the disabled, such as age exemptions, repeating classes and financial obligations;

- The organization of the first National Solidarity Forum in June 2005, whose recommendations led to the formulation of short, medium and long term strategies to promote the education of persons with disabilities, and also to the following actions:
 - The inter-ministerial meetings organised by MINAS with other ministries such as MINESEC, MINESUP, MINSANTE, MINATD, MINSEP, MINJUSTICE, MINTP to take account of the disability dimension in the sectors concerned;
 - The signing of two joint circular letters by MINAS and MINESEC on 2 August 2005 and 14 August 2007 respectively to facilitate the admission of disabled pupils and those with disabled parents to public secondary schools and their participation in official examinations;
 - The designation in 2009 of a disability focal point at MINESEC to address the concerns of disabled children about their education and the facilities open to them;
 - The workshop held in January 2007 in Edéa on the networking of disabled persons' organizations which gave better insight of disabled persons and streamlined relations between public authorities and civil society;
 - The organization of three days of social action on 1 February 2006, 20 June 2007 and 24 December 2008 under the high patronage of the First Lady of Cameroon, UNESCO Ambassador for education and social inclusion, dedicated to raising the awareness of the community about building the capacity of the marginalized to assert themselves and thus contribute their full quota to the development of our country. During the functions, disabled persons and their associations were presented with financial aid, school materials and other devices such as white canes, Braille machines, hearing aids, etc.

- Tax exemptions granted private schools for disabled children, including the deaf;

- The adoption in July 2006 by the National Committee on the Rehabilitation and Socio-economic Reintegration of Disabled Persons (CONRHA) of the 2006 – 2009 national action plan for the protection and promotion of disabled persons, which has an important component on the development of special education institutions for the visually and hearing impaired;

- The introduction of a three-year “Special Education Programme” at the Faculty of Education of the University of Buea during the 2006-2007 Academic Year. The programme is open to those who have the final school-leaving certificate, the Baccalauréat and includes courses in sign language, braille and psychology of the disabled, leading to the award of a Bachelor’s degree in Special Education;
- Training of young disabled persons at the African Institute of Computer Studies (IAI-Cameroon) in Information and Communications Technology (ICT);
- Training and supporting the socio-economic integration of 85 disabled persons, 84 of them in the framework of the PAIRPEV project at a cost of FCFA 35,000,000 and 110 pensioners at the CNRH for FCFA 10,000,000;

Specific and significant activities in 2008 included:

- The signing on 1 October 2008 of the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The ratification of this international legal instrument is ongoing. However, the Cameroonian Government was one step ahead and had already included some of the relevant provisions of the convention in its bill on the protection and promotion of disabled persons which is still in the pipeline;
- A compilation by all stakeholders, including representatives of associations of disabled persons, of descriptions of jobs that the disabled can do, for the use of employers and decision makers;
- The signing on 18 April 2008 of a circular letter by the Prime Minister, on compliance with public procurement regulations, directing developers and their representatives to ensure that, building and site plans for public buildings and roads take the disability factor into account and address the concerns of access to such places by persons with disabilities;
- The formulation and technical approval by all stakeholders, including representatives of associations of disabled persons, of a practical guide on the access of disabled persons to public buildings and infrastructure;
- The signing of a joint MINAS-MINESUP circular letter on enhancing the living and learning conditions of disabled or vulnerable students in state universities;
;
- The organization, during the 17th International Day of the Disabled, of a national social mobilisation campaign on the theme “**Let us love our children – let us nurture our children**”, an expression of the need to love disabled

children and give them the same opportunities for development and social integration in order to bring about a real change in the thinking and behaviour of the society vis-à-vis disabled children, and ensure greater respect for their rights;

- The organisation of a workshop on the access of disabled children to education resulting in the preparation of a manual on access to education by children with disabilities.

These initiatives have encountered a number of difficulties, including:

- The scarcity of State funding, owing to which it has not been possible to meet the many needs of children with disabilities
- The continuing qualitative and quantitative shortage of specialized institutions and staff

2) Healthcare for Children with Disabilities

Health care for disabled children will be improved through the construction of a national centre for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in Maroua and the training of specialized staff under cooperation with the NGO AIAS d'Afragola.

The construction of a centre for the manufacture of prosthetic and orthotic devices is planned in Garoua with the support of an international NGO.

These facilities will take the pressure off the National Centre in Yaoundé.

The ENNAS retraining project, which aims to train specialists in various areas of social service, will address the current shortage of specialist staff in a reasonable length of time.

Together with the international community, Cameroon annually celebrates the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which provides an opportunity to raise public awareness of the fundamental rights of such persons, in particular children.

C. Health and Health Services (Art. 14)

The Cameroonian public authorities, through the Ministry of Public Health, have strengthened primary health programmes by bringing health facilities closer to the beneficiary populations (health districts and integrated health centres).

Measures taken in this area led to the acquisition in 2005 of 2,521 health facilities, including 267 hospitals of all categories and 2,254 health centres nationwide. Despite the severe shortage of personnel in the sector, due primarily to a freeze in public service employment during the 90's, the ratio of health workers to the population is about one doctor to 10,000 inhabitants and one nurse to 2,000 inhabitants. Special recruitment exercises for 1,800 staff made up of 148 doctors and related professionals and 1,652 health personnel were carried out in 2002, 2003 and 2009.

The sectoral strategy of the Ministry of public health consists in developing disease control programmes (expanded vaccination programme, malaria control programme, tuberculosis and aids control programmes) with permanent secretariats responsible for implementing and monitoring these programmes.

At the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, access to potable water and adequate sanitation were recognised as essential to a healthy existence. However, the majority of the populations who live in abject poverty or in rural areas make do with surface water from rivers, springs and wells, which is not potable.

Consequently, three strategies have been identified to guarantee access for the populations to potable water. These are:

- Strengthening programmes for the construction of infrastructure for access to potable water;
- Setting up mechanisms for the management of the infrastructure by the user populations;
- Improving mechanisms to control the quality of drinking water.

It must be noted that the proportion of households with access to potable water rose from 40.6 per cent in 2001 to 45.3 per cent in 2007 (ECAM II and III) and the proportion of people from 63 per cent in 2004 to 69 per cent in 2006 (MICS II, III).

Maternal health is one of the action priorities in the health sector. The implementation of the recently adopted national reproductive health programme and the ongoing implementation of emergency obstetric and neonatal care in some health facilities are some of the actions being undertaken to improve maternal health.

Furthermore, the proportion of childbirths assisted by qualified medical personnel rose from 54.3 per cent in 1998 to 59 per cent in 2006. The proportion of women who attended ante-natal clinics also rose from 78.8 per cent in 1998 to 83.3 per cent in 2004 and to 84 per cent in 2006. Although maternal mortality is still high, the monitoring capacities for pregnant women and women in labour have improved greatly.

Table 1: Evolution of indicators of maternal and child health

Indicator	1991	1998	2004	2006
Maternal mortality <i>Probability of death per 100,000 live births</i>	-	430* (1989-1998)	669* (1995 -2004)	
Pre-natal visit	78.8%	78.8%	83.3%	84%
Delivery at a health-care centre	62.4%	54.3%	59%	57%
Use of modern contraception	4.2%	7.1%	12.5%	29%
Infant mortality <i>Probability of death under the age of 1 per 1,000 live births</i>	65	77	74	74%
Infant and Child mortality <i>Probability of death under the age of 5 per 1,000 live births</i>	126.3	150.7	142	144%
Chronic malnutrition	24.4%	29.3%	31.7%	30.4%
Acute malnutrition	3%	6%	5%	6.1%

Source: Demographic and health surveys in 1991, 1998, 2004 and MICS 2006

The method used makes it possible to assess prevailing conditions from 0 to 9 years before the survey.

1) Status of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Cameroon

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among the general population was estimated at 5.5 per cent in 2004, of which 6.8 per cent for women and 4.1 per cent for men. Infection through unprotected sex remains the most common form of transmission, although mother to child transmission is also a source of concern. The number of infected children was estimated at 69,000 at the end of 2001 and 43,000 in 2003 (UNAIDS 2003). By UNAIDS estimates, the number of adults (15 years and above) living with HIV/AIDS will rise to 470,000 by 2005, and the number of children (0 to 14 years) to 35,000. According to the same source, the total number of HIV/AIDS related deaths since the pandemic broke is 48,700, made up of 40,000 adults and 8,700 children. By 2005, Cameroon had 122,670 AIDS orphans.

In 2007, HIV prevalence was estimated at 5.1 per cent among 15 – 49 year olds (2008 UNAIDS report). The disease is a widespread epidemic in Cameroon.

Since the launch of the 2006-2010 National Strategic Plan, a number of activities aimed at reducing the spread and impact of HIV among the general population have been carried out.

The year 2008 is mid-stream in the implementation of the 2006-2010 NSP. It was marked by a decrease in funding for Aids. Although this affected the implementation of some activities, it did not slow down the Cameroonian Government's momentum with respect to Aids control. Good governance and results-based management are the foundation for the implementation of activities.

The year was characterised by the decentralisation of treatment for PLWA, the extension of PMTCT services country-wide and increases in the number of supported orphans and vulnerable children.

The data collection system for the follow-up/monitoring component, the linchpin of the programme, improved greatly.

At-risk groups are basically, prostitutes, the military, police and related workers, truck drivers, prisoners, young people and children.

Table 2: Basic statistics on the impact of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon from 2005 to 2008

Area/indicators	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Sources
Number of people infected with HIV/AIDS	462 211	465 313	470 452	500 029	505 000	510 000	549 294	EPP estimates Spectrum (NACC UNAIDS,WHO)
Men	192 775	271 162	289 646	194 582	196 516	198 461	211 303	
Women	269 436	271 162	289 646	305 627	308 484	311 539	331 991	
Adults	423 296	424 725	428 257	456 631	462 450	467 000	500 294	
Children	38 915	40 588	42 195	43 398	42 554	43 000	43 000	
New aids cases	46 221	47 643	49 421	49 041	49 041	50 000	50 000	
Men	20 326	20 844	5 822	19 978	19 978	20 000	20 000	
Women	25 896	26 799	43 600	29 063	29 063	30 000	30 000	
New Aids cases	46 221	47 643	49 421	50 314	51 214	54 481	51 598	
Men	20 326	20 844	20 822	21 466	20 886	23 075	21 272	
Women	25 896	26 799	28 599	28 848	30 329	31 406	30 326	

Area/indicators	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Sources
HIV prevalence in 15-49 year olds (per cent)	5.8per cent	5.7per cent	5.6per cent	5.4per cent	5.4per cent	5.1per cent	5.1per cent	EDS III, EPP estimates Spectrum (NACC, UNAIDS, WHO)

Table 3: Family support for OVC

Area/indicators	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Sources
Estimated number of OVC	240 000	305 000	305 000	EPP 2007				
Number of orphans who have benefitted from educational, psychosocial, medical and food support				25 643	23 750	45 186	57 441	Data: National OVC Support Programme
Percentage of orphans and other vulnerable children (0-17years) who live at home and have received external support for treatment				10.7per cent	8.6per cent	15.0per cent	18.8per cent	
Current literacy ratio between orphans and non-orphans aged 10 to 14 years			0.98		0.87			EDS III, MICS 2006

b) – Control Strategy

The Aids control strategy comprises:

1) Prevention

Prevention is the principal component of the strategy. The basic component, which used to be known as Information-Education-Communication (IEC), is now referred to as “Behaviour Change Communication” (BCC) and consists in raising awareness among the general population and risk groups in particular about the following:

- Modes of transmission;
- Prevention methods based on responsible sexual behaviour and the use of one-time or sterile medical equipment;
- Transfusion safety which means reducing blood transfusions to a minimum and only prescribing them if absolutely necessary, subject to prior screening of the blood to be transfused. To this end, a network of laboratories equipped with HIV testing materials will be set up in all the health districts. A blood transfusion guide has been prepared.
- Free, voluntary screening;
- Prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT);
- Modules on Aids prevention and control have been integrated into school curricula.

This selected approach is both global and systematic. An ever-increasing number of women benefit from this service and they have an average rate of consent to screening of almost 63 per cent. Pregnant women who test HIV positive and their new born babies are given nevirapine free of charge.

2) The Effective Treatment of Sick, Infected or Affected Persons, Orphans and Parents

Initially treatment was difficult due to the exorbitant cost (CFA 300,000.00) of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. Today, the Government has opted for universal access to treatment and has been subsidising ARVs since 2003. This has led to a drastic reduction in costs to CFA 15,000 and to a further reduction in 2004 to CFA 7,000 and 3,000 depending on the protocol. Treatment is free for children between 0 to 15 years and this facility has been extended to adults.

3) Epidemiological Surveillance

Various studies and surveys are used to provide detailed information on the pandemic.

Apart from routine epidemiological surveillance, sentinel surveillance is another principal source of information.

Sentinel surveillance targets pregnant women.

4) Research

Research focuses on:

- Viral forms;
- Immunization;
- Treatment in collaboration with practitioners of traditional medicine.

Furthermore, the Chantal Biya International Research Centre, led by the eminent professors Luc Montagnier and Gallo, who together discovered the Aids virus, is conducting research into vaccines.

The increasing exposure of certain socio-professional groups to the disease has led to the identification of five groups in Cameroon whose behaviour puts them at risk:

- Prostitutes;
- The military, police and related personnel;
- Truck drivers;
- Prisoners;
- Young people including girls, who have a higher HIV prevalence rate.

5) Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Control

The main components of STD control are:

- Attendance at a health facility as soon as the first symptoms appear in order to avoid self-medication;
- Use of algorithms to enable medical personnel treat STDs easily and efficiently;
- The use of IEC to promote sexually responsible behaviour.

Until 1997, the National Aids Control Programme depended exclusively on external funding. 1998 saw the implementation of the five-year action plan, which was budgeted for and implemented with state and donor funds.

6) Malaria and Tuberculosis Control

- Malaria

This disease is endemic in our country, accounting for 45 per cent of health centre attendance. In 35 per cent of cases, the disease leads to death in children below the age of five years.

At the Abuja Summit in Nigeria on 25 April, 2000, the Heads of State and Government of 46 African countries pledged to take appropriate measures to halve malaria incidence by 2010. Further to this regional-level commitment, the Government began a process to reform malaria control, leading to the adoption of a national strategic plan for malaria control for 2002 to 2006. Implementation of the plan focused on prevention through the use of treated mosquito nets. The two most vulnerable target groups, pregnant women and children under five years of age, received special attention during implementation of this strategy and were given free treated mosquito nets.

Out of the 610,000 nets acquired for pregnant women, some 250,000 were distributed. In 2005, 800,000 more nets were acquired.

150,000 mosquito nets were acquired and distributed to children below five years. 1,100,000 more were acquired in 2005.

To facilitate access by the rest of the population to these mosquito nets, the cost was reduced from FCFA 5000 (US\$ 9) to FCFA 3,500 (US\$6) in 2004.

- Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis has seen resurgence in recent years due to poverty among a large section of the population as well as the increase in HIV/AIDS cases, for which TB is the primary opportunistic infection. The national tuberculosis control programme has 173 diagnostic and treatment centres nationwide.

Government initially reduced the cost of treatment to FCFA 5,000 in 1997, and then decided on free distribution from 1 October 2004

7) Disadvantaged Populations

Most of the programmes drawn up for children in the marginalised groups are implemented on site with institutional support from United Nations bodies, bilateral cooperation and local and international NGOs.

D. Social Security and Services and Facilities for Children

Pursuant to Article 20.2 (a-c) of the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of Children, the child has the right to social security, including social insurance.

In Cameroon, social security is administered by:

- The National Social Contingency Fund (CNPS) for the workers who are governed by the Labour Code, i.e. employees of private and semi-public companies. The NSIF provides the following services: ante-natal and maternity allowances, per diem, medical expenses and family allowances, and any allowances which contribute to the care and well-being of the child.
- The Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform, the Ministry of Finance as well as all other departments concerned, for public servants and non-public service workers.

It would seem then that salaried workers have first call on the right to social security benefits, and then, their children and dependants.

Normative Framework

The framework has not seen any major changes since 2001. The same old laws and regulations govern social security at the level of the CNPS and the Public Service. Even at this level, the system is fraught with problems such as:

- Cumbersome procedures;
- Structural and organizational weakness;
- Complex bureaucratic systems;
- Disparities within the CNPS and the Public Service;
- Lack of computerization;
- Irregular updating of databank;

- Arrears in contributions due to the financial difficulties encountered by private companies and the State concerning employees covered by the Labour Code;
- Arrears in payments to CNPS beneficiaries due to arrears in contributions and a decrease in financial resources on one hand, and a decline in salaried employment on the other;
- Restrictions in social security beneficiaries: children of non-salaried workers, informal sector workers, farmers, artisans, the self-employed and unemployed are excluded;
- The low amounts of allowances which are mere tokens;
- Limited areas of insurance coverage: medical insurance and unemployment benefits are not covered;
- The adverse impacts of the economic crisis.

- **Prospects**

The social security reform underway in Cameroon aims at extending coverage to as many Cameroonians as possible, including those not traditionally covered and those in the nine branches of social security.

In view of this, a think tank on the modernisation of the social security system was established by decree no. 189/PM of 4 November 2008. The committee has already submitted to Government the six (6) draft bills listed below:

- Draft bill establishing the general framework for social security in Cameroon;
- Draft bill on the creation, organisation and functioning of mutual funds with regard to social security;
- Draft bill establishing the general framework for health insurance cover;
- Draft bill on the organisation and functioning of the national fund for state workers (CNPE);
- Draft bill on the organisation and functioning of a national social security Fund (CNSS);

- Draft bill on the organisation and functioning of the national health insurance office (CNSM).

During consideration of the various indicators, particular attention was paid to facilitating children's access to the social benefits to be provided in the above-mentioned laws.

It must also be mentioned that since children's access to social benefits is dependent on the parents, any improvements for the children will necessarily come about through improvements in parents' benefits.

Moreover, the Government is encouraging the creation of mutual health funds to try to make up the inadequate health insurance benefits in Cameroon (search for legislation on health care for Government workers and their families). Members of mutual health funds and their children will enjoy health care so long as their contributions are up to date.

E. Care for Orphans

Orphans receive medical care in hospitals and within the framework of various Government child care programmes. However, considering the sensitive and specific nature of the problem of orphans, a problem which has become even more complex due to the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the Government and its partners have established a number of programmes and projects to address the issue. An example is the national programme on support to HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children, funded by the Global Fund and implemented under the supervision of the NACC and MINAS. This programme has provided varied support (nutritional, educational, health, psychosocial and legal) to OVC since 2006.

From 2003 to 2005, the Global Fund provided care to 20 000 (twenty thousand) OVC. HACL and *Synergies Africaines* assisted 1,000 OCV, and "Bi-Multi", 3,200 (three thousand two hundred). In 2008, about 183,000 OVC were identified, 65,000 of whom were assisted by the Government and its partners (Bi-mult, Global Fund, etc.) as part of projects and programmes.

The 2006/2010 national aids control programme aims to treat 75 per cent of the 122,000 (one hundred and twenty-two thousand) OVC identified in Cameroon. A workshop to brainstorm on the establishment of a fostering system was organised by the Government in partnership with civil society and development partners. Participants strongly recommended the elaboration of a fostering guide for OVC in Cameroon which was approved in August 2009 and will be implemented in 2010.

VIII - EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

A. Education, including Vocational Training and Guidance (Article 11)

The laws and regulations that govern education are, to a large extent, in line with the Charter. Cameroon acknowledges the right of all its citizens to education and instruction without discrimination. The public authorities have taken permanent measures to guarantee equal access to education for all. Currently, the gross enrolment rate for girls is 71per cent as compared to 81per cent for boys. Some of the measures taken is the launching by MINEDUC of a national campaign to promote girls education, and the preparation of a strategy paper for implementation.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, MINAS, deals with school placements and gives scholarships to destitute children and children from poor homes. Children with disabilities or whose parents have disabilities, receive the same benefits in accordance with law 83/013 of 21 July 1983 on the protection of disabled persons, and decree no, 90/1516 of 26 November, 1990 establishing the procedure for the implementation of the Act.

The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MINEFOP) is in charge of employment and vocational training. It has two types of training structures: the SAR/SM and the rapid vocational training centres.

The Cameroonian Government has also taken steps to enhance the mechanisms for assisting children through:

- The establishment in 2002 of a youth secretariat within the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and in 2004, the creation of a Ministry of Youth by decree no. 2004/320;
- The preparation of a national policy framework document on the integral development of the young child as part of the 2003-2007 UNICEF-Cameroon Cooperation Programme;
- Distribution of minimum kits to public primary schools;
- Establishment of human rights clubs in secondary schools;
- Training of Trainers in human rights by the National Commission on Human Rights and Liberties;

Cameroon will rely on domestic resources and international cooperation to fund this project.

- ***Domestic Resources***

These comprise budget allocations which, with the economic upturn, have been growing for the social sector: allocations envisaged as part of the implementation of the PRSP, HIPC funds, subsidies and customs exemptions are all a part of this growth as are contributions from national NGOs. E.g. the Chantal Biya Foundation builds the Champion FCB schools and leases them to the Government.

- ***International Cooperation***

This includes contributions from United Nations bodies, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies such as international NGOs, through jointly funded programmes and projects.

1) Availability of Education and Vocational Training

➤ *Availability of Education*

The availability of education improved significantly with the increase in the number of classrooms and teachers. An example is the large number of primary schools that were constructed under the Cameroon – Japan cooperation and are currently in operation.

At the nursery and primary levels, 3,562 schools are in operation, making it possible to enrol 138,716 children in nursery and 2,798,523 pupils in primary schools.

Gross enrolment rates at pre-school and primary levels have increased steadily, from 10.5 and 83.5 to 13.5 and 105.4 per cent (TBS2 P57), mainly due to the free primary education policy enshrined in Art. 47, Decree No. 2001/041 of 19 February 2001.

Between 2001 and 2007, 461 secondary schools were constructed to guarantee the availability of education in the border towns and landlocked areas as in the cities.

1,477 primary schools have been constructed.

The Maroua teacher training college was established on 9 August 2009, bringing to four the number of such institutions in Cameroon.

➤ *Availability of Vocational Training*

As part of its mandate to provide vocational training, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training manages the rural artisan and housecraft centres (SAR/SM) and the public vocational training institutions, and supervises the private training institutions and centres.

Apart from the SAR/SM, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training has two categories of intensive professional training centres, the public centres and the approved private centres. These vocational training institutions offer over 75 training programmes in professions in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

As far as vocational training institutions are concerned, Cameroon has 186 SAR/SM, seven public intensive vocational training centres and almost 450 approved private accelerated training centres.

Learners who register in vocational training institutions are trained for a period of nine to 24 months and obtain a vocational school leaving certificate issued by the training institution and endorsed by the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training.

Learners enjoy accident insurance cover during the trip to and from the institution or during practical work in the workshop. The cover is akin to taking out insurance cover with the local insurance companies.

Courses are prepared using the skills-based approach in order to facilitate the socio-professional integration of the learners. During training, they are given some professional guidance at the beginning (immersion), during (consolidation) and at the end of the course (integration).

2) Improving the Quality of Education and Vocational Training

The Cameroonian Government carried out certain strategic activities aimed at improving the quality of education and vocational training.

➤ Measures taken to Provide Free Primary Education:

The Government directed that primary education be made free to increase enrolment.

- Major changes in Government policy

To make good its commitments at the Copenhagen Summit, held from 6 to 12 March 1995, and achieve the millennium development goals (MDG 2000), the Government of Cameroon has, since the year 2000 to date, carried out some bold initiatives to increase the availability of education and raise enrolment.

Examples of initiatives undertaken to increase the availability of education for vulnerable children are:

- Circular 24/05/MINESEC/SG/IGE/OBC/D/DIVEX of 11 October 2005 addressed to the provincial and departmental representatives, national private education representatives, heads of public and private institutions to organise examinations for hearing and visually impaired candidates;
- The joint circular letter 34/06/LC/MINESEC/MINAS of 2 August 2006 on the enrolment in public secondary schools of children with disabilities or whose parents have disabilities and are poor;
- Joint circular letter No. 283/07/LC/MINESEC/MINAS of 14 August 2007 on the identification of children with disabilities or whose parents have disabilities and are poor, who are registered in public secondary schools, and their participation in official examinations;
- Joint circular 8/0006/LC/MINESUP/MINAS of 9 July 2008 on the improvement of reception facilities and care for students with disabilities or vulnerable students in state universities in Cameroon;
- Introduction of international humanitarian law (IHL) in the school curriculum, with 18 institutions participating in the IHL experiment, including Maroua High school, Kousseri High school, Ambam Bilingual School, Mvomeka High School, etc.

➤ **Measures to Promote Pre-school Education**

The Prime Minister signed into law, decree no. 2001/110/PM of 20 March 2003 on the organisation and operation of public educational institutions for young children. They are described as special institutions tasked with the reception, guidance, survival, protection and development of children from 0 – 6 years. The institutions are under the Ministry of Social Affairs and comprise nurseries, crèches and day-care centres.

A strategy of convergence was formulated with support from UNICEF to help with the proper implementation of the convention on the rights of the child, with Adamaoua chosen for a pilot project.

From 2003 to 2007, the general objective was to develop an effective plan for the implementation of joint activities, to supervise young children in this region and ensure their integral development, and by so doing, define a model that could be replicated in other regions.

With this in mind, MINEDUB has embarked on the following actions with its development partners:

- Helping to preparing an institutional framework for an integrated approach in dealing with young children entitled: Formulation of a National Policy Framework Document for the Integral Development of Young Children;
 - Preparation of standards for the care of infants of 0 to 3 years;
 - Preparation of an integrated programme for parental education;
 - Support for activities that promote access to birth registration;
 - Mapping out the structures involved in early learning and pre-school activities in Adamaoua;
 - Building capacity and enhancing the behaviours of families and households in the area of early stimulation of children in Adamaoua, the Far North and the East.
- Measures to Reform Koranic Schools

A bill is in the process of drafting at the Office of the Prime Minister to reform the courses taught at the koranic schools. Thus, in addition to verses from the Koran, arithmetic, French and English will be taught.

Other educational reforms:

Decree No. 2001/041 of 19 April 2001 concerning the organization of school councils at the primary and nursery levels and institutional councils at the secondary, post-primary, and technical levels. These bodies supervise the policy-making council, monitor and evaluate the functioning of schools and institutions.

With regard to the improvement of the quality of education, the State has undertaken reforms to harmonize the educational system. New teaching methods and the skills-based approach ensure that the child is the focus of the learning/teaching process. Thus the introduction of innovative experiences which enhance children's self-worth, the adoption of comprehensive and flexible programmes and the teaching of life skills at school are a reflection of the commitment to provide children with quality education.

The contribution of the State to financing education is relatively modest, namely CFAF 182 billion in 2001 (15.7 per cent of public expenditure as against 20 per cent in the indicative framework of the accelerated initiative for universal primary school enrolment), whereas that of parents is very high (CFAF 239 billion, or 57.3 per cent, in 2001 as against 182 billion, or 43.3 per cent, for the State).

However, funds made available to this administration have increased greatly, coming fourth place in budget allocations. Pre-school and primary enrolments have also risen significantly, mainly because education at that level is free. Moreover, 5,525 new teachers have been recruited, bringing to almost 25,000 the number employed. 1,458 new classrooms were built in 2008.

The quality of teaching has also improved through the introduction of information technology and communication programmes. These efforts have led to a steady rise in success rates at final examinations, which stands at about 80 per cent at the moment, whilst repeater rates have significantly reduced.

Private education reforms are now completed, thus opening up greater opportunities for advocates of this type of education.

Concerning secondary education, the tough measures already in place are being continued. This sector has the largest budgetary allocation of 204 billion.

One priority was to extend the school map by creating 155 new institutions in all the regions, building several classrooms and transforming 46 institutions into technical and bilingual schools to increase the numbers.

To improve the quality of education, 2,000 new teachers from teacher training colleges were recruited. Ten thousand more underwent further training, and 4,000 were inspected. Six new institutions were given multimedia resource centres whilst five others experimented with teaching local languages and cultures.

Alongside these, initiatives were taken to develop partnerships with the private sector. Over 500 teachers did practical training with companies and 500 private institutions received subsidies amounting to one billion CFAF.

It must be noted that results of official examinations are improving.

For the 2009-2010 Academic Year, an important building and rehabilitation programme is planned for the Bakassi area. Several thousands of teachers and office workers will be employed.

At the academic level, classes started as envisaged at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (teacher training institute) of the University of Maroua and at the faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences of the Universities of Dschang and Ngaoundéré. Surveys on the opening of the Institut Supérieur du Sahel in the Far North province are being conducted.

The research park of the Yaoundé I Ecole Normale Supérieure Polytechnique is now open to the students in our universities to give them professional training for creating and managing a business. The free zone concept started in this same school.

At the same time, the university authorities continued with efforts to consolidate the Bachelors/Masters/Doctorate system.

The satellite equipment and servers for the two virtual universities at the Université de Yaoundé, were installed, one for national purposes and the other, to cover the sub-region. Prior to this, the information technology centre had started its operations.

During the past year, 16 private institutions of higher learning were established, bringing to 73 the number of this type of institution in Cameroon. Soon, institutes of fine arts will be created at the Universities of Douala and Dschang, as well as the Institute of fisheries sciences in the economic capital.

As regards infrastructure, we cannot list all that has been done or initiated for our universities by way of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, amphitheatres and lecture halls.

Within the framework of the university's social governance, an agreement has just been signed with a local insurance company. More than a thousand teachers and their families already have health insurance cover which may be used in case of travel abroad.

➤ **Improving Vocational Training**

In a bid to improve the availability of vocational training and adapt it to the needs of the work place, MINEFOP has selected the skills-based approach. This method begins with the production of training manuals through an analysis of the work situation. Through the approach, 15 new training manuals have been developed in the two official languages, French and English for ITC-related and SAR/SM jobs.

Still in a bid to improve the quality of vocational training, MINEFOP has initiated a five-year project (2007 – 2011) with IADM (multilateral debt relief initiative) funding which has, so far, rehabilitated some training facilities, bought equipment, trained trainers, set up institutional councils, etc.

With regard to training in private institutions, MINEFOP monitors the quality of training by giving approval to and supervising examinations and certifying training.

In order to improve the availability of training, three professional training centres of excellence are in the process of being set up in Douala, Limbé and Sangmélina with support from South Korea, to upgrade the skills of Cameroonian youth and position them socially and professionally.

3) Guaranteeing Fairness

➤ ***Education***

With regard to education and literacy, the adoption in 2002 of the sectoral education strategy has helped facilitate access to education for young girls through numerous programmes and projects. One example is the “Basic Education” project whose aim is to reduce the repeater and drop-out rates among young girls. In order to promote and protect young girls and women through literacy and non-formal education, the number of centres for the advancement of women grew from 27 in 1998–2000 to 35 in 2000–2005 (source: MINPROFF). The Act on educational guidance in Cameroon was passed in 1998 and steps have been taken to overcome obstacles to formal education for young girls.

Reference is also made to the “Schools – friends of children, friends of girls” initiative, which is designed to increase the enrolment of girls and promote the right of children to participate. It was introduced by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with UNICEF.

➤ ***Vocational Training***

As far as access to vocational training is concerned, the SAR/SMs enrol young Cameroonians who have completed primary school. These training institutions have children between the ages of 12 to 17 years, in conformity with the definition of the child as contained in the United Nations Charter.

In line with its policy of combating unemployment and poverty, MINEFOP organizes competitions for the award of scholarships for all young Cameroonians of 17 years and above, irrespective of gender. Winners of scholarships are trained in private and public institutions and centres. The rapid training centres provide training for young people regardless of whether they have completed junior secondary school or not.

In order to guarantee fairness, no training programme is exclusive. All training is open to young people with no discrimination of gender or physical ability. In other words, training is open to young people with disabilities and from poor homes.

The total number of learners for the 2008-2009 Academic Year in the SAR/SM is estimated at 12,874, comprising 5,629 girls and 7,245 boys. The public and private vocational training centres had 11,443 learners, made up of 4,300 girls and 7,143 boys. This gives a total of 24,307 learners trained in vocational training institutions during the 2008-2009 Academic Year.

➤ **Prospects**

With a view to pursuing its efforts in « education for peace and tolerance », teaching child rights and other human rights and equality of access to education at the primary and secondary levels, the departments in charge of education (MINEDUB/MINESEC) plan to introduce humanitarian law modules in civic education programmes, and to provide text books to children from poor backgrounds and priority education zones.

The hard work that has been done in the area of education to guarantee equal opportunities for our young people and train different levels of workers should not make us forget that we also have the task of preparing them for integration into professional and social life and giving them some moral and civic training.

B. Leisure and Recreational and Cultural Activities (Article 11)

The Government has carried out several activities to promote recreational and cultural activities:

- The creation of a State Secretariat responsible for the Youth at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and a Ministry for Youth in 2004;
- Revitalizing the National Committee on Youth and Adult education;
- Formulating a national youth policy;
- Financing the national literacy programme with HIPC funds;
- Implementing a project to create a youth reintegration fund;
- Article 31, Decree No. 2001/041 of 19 February 2001 on the organization of public schools, creates a general assembly of clubs and associations of pupils, and article 44 provides for an after-school and extra-curricular activities department in each public secondary school to coordinate the school's vacation camps, construction projects for the youth and the institution's cultural activities.
- The Ministry of Youth has given a new boost to vacation camps.

IX. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

A. Children in Emergency Situations

1) Child Refugees, Repatriated or Displaced Children (Articles 23 and 25)

Cameroon is a haven for refugees and their families. Currently, refugees from some 10 countries are accommodated here with the support of the United Nations and the High Commission for Refugees in particular. Refugees come from Burundi, Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. Their camps are in the Eastern, Northern and Central provinces of Yaoundé, and on the coast in Douala,

The number of child refugees at the time of collecting the information for this report is estimated at 3,922. They enjoy services designed to meet their nutritional, educational and health needs. Primary education is free for those children still at that level. Those in secondary school are awarded scholarships by the UNHCR and the European Union and some embassies.

In the border conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria over the disputed Bakassi peninsula, a Committee was set up to channel state assistance to civilians displaced from the war zones. The Committee immediately went to work with medium and short-term actions:

Short-term activities included:

- Food aid;
- Medical Aid;
- Provision of school fees, school supplies and school uniforms;
- First aid kits.

Medium term activities:

- The construction of huts with temporary materials as family dwellings with wells and latrines;
- The provision of social services such as health centres, schools and social centres.

Long-term activities focused on opening up certain areas.

3) Children in Armed Conflicts and Specific Measures taken to Protect and take care of the Children (Article 22)

Cameroon does not have the problem of child soldiers or of armed conflicts involving children.

However, Act 84/04 of 4 July 1984 on the conditions for the adoption and guardianship of orphans provides for the care by the State of children whose father or guardian has been killed either by the opponent or in battle defending the constitution of the land, or whose father, mother or guardian has died from injuries or from a sicknesses contracted or aggravated through the war.

B. Children in Conflict with the Law

1) Administration of Juvenile Justice (Article 17)

Concerns about the administration of juvenile justice are taken into account in the framework of the preliminary draft code on the protection of children, which is in the course of being approved.

The Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE) has also contributed much for the promotion and protection of the rights of children, notably, the drafting of the bills which led to the adoption of Act 97/009 of 10 January 1997 amending and completing certain provisions of the criminal code and adds an article 132bis on torture, Act 2005/007 of 27 July 2005 on the code of criminal procedure and which dedicates the whole of section 15 with its 13 chapters to juvenile delinquency; Act 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 on combating child trafficking and slavery of children.

In addition to these laws, the Ministry carried out other activities intended to help implement child rights:

- Preparing and distributing reports on the state of human rights in Cameroon for the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008, which highlight successes and shortcomings.
- The signing of two joint decrees on the administration of juvenile justice, in application of the new provisions of the code of criminal procedure by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals and the Minister of Social Affairs:

- No. 474/MINJUSTICE and 0013/MINAS of 30 November 2007, on the appointment of Assessors;
 - No. 475/MINJUSTICE and 0014/MINAS of 30 November 2007, on the appointment of delegates concerned with release on probation.
- The organization of training seminars in juvenile justice, with UNICEF support, for magistrates, criminal intelligence officers, prison officers and social workers in Yaoundé in 1998, in Ngaoundéré in 2002 and 2004, Garoua in 2004, Kribi in 2003 and 2007, Douala in 2006, Bertoua in 2007, Limbe in 2007, Bamenda in 2007, Bafia in 2008 and Garoua in 2009. The resource persons trained participants in the national and international legal instruments in the juvenile justice distribution chain;
 - Putting together a collection of all the laws on children in Cameroon;
 - Decree 92/052 of 27 March 1992 on the Prison System in Cameroon, which provides that minors in prison should be separated from adults so as not to undermine their reintegration into the society;
 - Decree 2001/109/PM of 20 March 2001 on the organization and functioning of public institutions for the guidance of children and rehabilitation of social misfits;
 - Act 2005/007 of 27 July 2005 on the criminal procedure code, which dedicates a whole section to the prosecution and trial of juveniles;
 - Decree 2009/0301/PM of 23 February 2009 on the creation and functioning of the Bepanda Rehabilitation Centre for minors in Douala which cares for children in conflict with the law;

2) Children deprived of liberty including all forms of detention, imprisonment or placement in any type of custody and compliance with the provisions of Article 5 (3) of the Charter which excludes the death penalty for children

The improvement of the care system for children deprived of liberty is a priority for the Government. In this connection, concern about the proper monitoring and assessment of the relevant public facilities has led to the signing of Decree No. 2001/109/PM of 20 March 2001 on the organization and functioning of public institutions for the care of children and the rehabilitation of social misfits. The work of these bodies has thus been harmonized and is more closely monitored, thereby significantly limiting inconsistent actions and abuses.

The recent creation of an annex to Yaounde Central Prison, the reform of the penitentiary system and the formulation of a new prison policy are part of a strategy designed to make prisons more humane and to address overcrowding.

The death penalty cannot be handed to a child in conflict with the law in Cameroon, as stipulated in the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code which deem children to have extenuating circumstances when found criminally liable.

A study on children in conflict with the law was conducted in 2002 by the Association AGIR with the support of UNICEF. The study highlighted the difficulties faced by most of the country's prisons when it comes to the detention of children. Apart from the lack of accommodation for minors in almost all the prisons, there are shortages in all the other areas:

- Shortage of carers and counsellors for child prisoners,
- Lack of material and financial resources which directly affects the feeding, health, education and leisure of the child prisoners.

➤ **Prospects**

There is a firm political commitment to protect the rights of children. Thus, as part of efforts to strengthen the legal framework on the protection of children, draft codes on persons and the family have been drawn up and approved, and are currently in the adoption process.

A psychosocial support manual for children in emergency situations was developed in August 2009 and is now available. Its implementation is underway.

3) Reform, Family Reintegration and Social Rehabilitation

Major action to improve infrastructure includes the creation in 2001 of the Crisis Centre in Mfoundi and the Shelter and Social Rehabilitation Centre for Street Children in Yaoundé. Similar facilities are planned in other regions.

In a bid to better address the problems children experience within their families and communities, and in order to afford them effective protection and optimum and lasting recovery, the Cameroonian Government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, launched an exercise in April 2007, to identify private institutions, NGOs and associations that give guidance to children.

This exercise led to the production of a list of 568 private childcare centres in Cameroon.

The aim is to make available to stakeholders in childcare (public and private services, development partners, the media, donors, charitable organizations...) a dynamic database to feed the children's social information network.

Because of the sensitive nature and the extreme vulnerability of children in distress, coupled with the lack of moral training for social misfits, ethics and professionalism were priority criteria for the classification used for the three grades of assessment, A, B, and C.

C. Children of Imprisoned Mothers

The rule in Cameroon is that prison sentences are personal to the convict. Thus mothers cannot take their babies into prison with them even if it is nursing. Prison officials, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Civil Society have all put measures in place to keep the child from emotional trauma because of the absence of its imprisoned mother.

D. Children Subjected to Exploitation and Violence

1. Economic Exploitation, including Child Labour (Article 15)

The exploitation of children is a growing phenomenon in Central and West Africa. The Government of Cameroon has teamed up with the international community to eradicate the practice.

➤ Normative and Institutional Framework

a. Domestic Level

Cameroon's lawmakers have taken measures to protect children from work that may be harmful to their growth. To this effect:

- Night work shall be prohibited for children (article 82, paragraph 2) ;
- No child shall be employed in an enterprise even as an apprentice before the age of 14 (fourteen) years, except as otherwise authorized by order of the minister in charge of labour, taking account of local conditions and the jobs which the children may be asked to do;
- A young person under 18 (eighteen) years of age may, under no circumstances, be employed on board ship as a trimmer or stocker (article 86 paragraph 2-1 of the Labour Code);

- The Inspector of Labour may request the services of a qualified medical officer to examine children to ascertain that they are fit for the work they are employed to do.

b. International Cooperation

- Cameroon has ratified ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour and taken immediate and efficient measures to ensure their prohibition and elimination;
- Together with the rest of the international community, on 12 June of every year, Cameroon commemorates the International Day Against Child Labour;
- On 22 October 2004, the Minister of Labour and Social Security signed an accord to participate in the National Programme for the 'Elimination of Child Labour, to which Cameroon acceded in 2002.

The WACAP Project, whose ultimate goal is to combat slavery and exploitation of children in the cocoa and coffee plantations, is in line with this dynamic to wage a vehement war against this scourge.

The projects' pilot phases took place from 2002 to 2006 in three regions, and led to:

- Identification and withdrawal of 5,000 children from the plantations;
- Reintegration of nearly 1,350 children, with financial support from the Government of the United States, to the tune of 650 million CFA francs to carry out the WACAP and LUTRENA projects.

Lack of accurate statistical data is a flaw and challenge at the same time for improving interventions for children subjected to economic exploitation. To gauge the extent of the problem and add to knowledge on this scourge, in-depth quantitative studies will be carried out.

However, a study on child labour in Cameroon conducted by the national statistics institute) showed that child labour is closely linked to the poverty situation prevailing in the country, and the dire effects on school enrolment. Nearly 28 per cent of children aged five to 17 in Cameroon are compelled to do work that should have been abolished. This is even more serious in rural, northern areas and the east of the country. The children's characteristics, including age, survival of the parents, level of education, the households they belong to; the number of persons living in the household, the presence of children under five, the standard of living of the household, the environment of the residence and

region or community in which the household lives; the characteristics of the household head, namely his level of education, religion, socio-economic group and where he plies his trade, all determine whether children will be put to work or not.

➤ **Difficulties**

All these efforts notwithstanding, the problem is far from being solved, because of the tenacity of the perpetrators and the community's reluctance to report known cases. The withdrawal of donors such as ILO has not helped matters. For instance, 3,000 children rescued from exploitation are still awaiting support for their reintegration. Likewise, extension of similar projects to the seven other regions may also prove difficult.

Furthermore, the notion of child labour, as defined by international conventions, does not always fit in with the specific socio-cultural circumstances of Cameroon, which considers the work of children as a socializing activity to prepare them for adulthood.

➤ **Prospects**

A draft procedure manual for the care of child slavery and exploitation victims is being prepared. A draft national action plan to combat slavery and sexual exploitation of children has been drafted and finalized, with the participation of representatives of relevant administrations, organizations of the United Nations system, religious bodies and civil society organizations.

2. Drug Abuse (Article 28)

It is no secret that children in Cameroon are exposed to drugs and alcohol. This concerns children who have dropped out of school, children who spend their time in bars and, above all, children who live on the streets. This situation is due to their vulnerable living conditions, debauchery and uncontrolled behaviour and a slavish imitation of role models shown in the mass media.

- National strategies to combat drug trafficking

Combating illicit dealings in narcotics is set forth in a specific regulatory framework defined by the authorities. The basic relevant text is Act 97/019 of 7 August 1997 narcotics and psychotropic substances control.

In addition to this legal instrument, the administrative authorities had already assessed the danger. They set up a national drugs control plan, which led to the establishment of a national drug control committee (CNLD) per decree 92/456/PM of 24 November 1992 by the Prime Minister.

To enhance its efficiency, the committee is attached to the Ministry of Public Health and works closely with other ministerial departments. It also receives support from private organizations to carry out research on the issue. The centre for economic research, studies and surveys (CRETES) was commissioned to carry out a survey on the drug situation in Cameroon in August 2002, in terms of trafficking, consumption, the relationship between drugs, crime, prostitution, HIV/AIDS and the environment.

- Sub-regional strategies on combating drug trafficking in Central Africa

To address the threat to public and individual health posed by drugs, the countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), of which Cameroon is a member, organized the very first seminar on the issue, from 3 to 8 December 1990 in Libreville, Gabon. The meeting demonstrated the commitment of governments to clamp down on the scourge that had taken over the community.

At the end of the meeting, preventive, curative and punitive measures were taken to lead to the adoption of a draft sub-regional treaty, which would serve as a framework law to be enforced by each State.

- Coordination bodies were set up as a drugs control strategy. For instance, there is a coordination unit alongside the technical committee for combating the illicit drug trade across borders. The first was set up within the General Secretariat of ECCAS, with the assistance of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), which provides logistics, equipment and office supplies.
- The technical committee was set up following a joint decision by Heads of State and Government of Central Africa on 6 April 1991 in Libreville. This commitment is considered as a continuation of the then Organization of African Union (OAU) (now African Union) policy on drug and narcotics control, which led to the declaration and action plan on drug abuse and trafficking at the 32nd summit of Heads of State of OAU, held in Yaounde on 8 July 1996. Per the same statement, it was decided that a drugs control centre would be set up for Africa. The action plan covered the period 1997-2001.

- Institutional interactions at the international level

"Drug abuse is a threat to this and coming generations as the plagues which swept many parts of the world in earlier centuries". This observation, made in 1990 by Javier Perez de Cuellar, former Secretary General of the United Nations, demonstrated international awareness about the risks related to drug abuse.

Given the porous nature of our borders and the channels between the legal and illicit economy, all national strategies to combat drug trafficking have little chance of

success. What is needed therefore is international cooperation quite unlike others, as provided by the United Nations.

Methods at the international level to combat drug trafficking include:

- The United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) which aims to limit the possession, use, trade in, distribution, import, export, manufacture and production of drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes and to address drug trafficking through international cooperation to deter and discourage drug traffickers. The 1972 protocol amending the Convention stresses the importance of treating and reintegrating drug addicts;
- The United Nations Convention on psychotropic substances (1971), which establishes an international system to combat psychotropic substances, to control the wide diversity of drugs;
- United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988) (see ABC of the United Nations P. 218-219 (of the French text)).

Apart from legal measures, UNDCP has been fighting the drug problem through various community programmes for the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts under:

- The social programme on illegal crops surveillance ;
 - The global evaluation programme, which publishes reliable updated statistics on illicit drug consumption worldwide.
- Legal assistance programme

Under this programme, several judges and 1,700 judicial staff were trained in drug control legislation and over 140 countries received legal assistance.

The need for concerted action, initiated by the United Nations, compelled the Heads of State of the Central African sub-region to adopt a decision on the authorization of the community's Secretary General, to sign the official act confirming the 1988 United Nations Convention against the Illicit traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

3. Violence and Torture (Article 16)

Several provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code are designed to curb violence against physical integrity perpetrated against individuals, in particular, children (illegal confinement, pawning of children, infanticide, neglect of the handicapped).

4. Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Article 27)

Measures taken to implement policies on programmes to prevent sexual exploitation of children in Cameroon include:

- Adoption and dissemination of the Global Codes of Ethics for Tourism, especially its provisions on prohibiting tourism for sexual purposes and specifically in the case of children;
- Organizing awareness and training workshops for Ministry of Tourism officers, peer educators, private tour operators (hotels, tourism agencies and entertainment houses) on combating sex tourism involving children all over the country;
- Promoting responsible tourism;
- Participating in World Tourism Organization programmes ;
- Study on "Sexual exploitation of children in Cameroon: Yaounde, Douala, Limbe, Ngaoundere", Frédéric Boursin and Séverin Cécile Abega, April 2004.

Criminal provisions against the sexual exploitation of children are severe: Article 344 of the Penal Code (corrupting the youth); 345 (moral danger); 346 (defilement of a minor under 16 years); 347 (defilement of a minor aged between 16 and 21 years), 347 (b), (homosexuality); 356 (forced marriage) and 296 (rape).

➤ Prospects

The following recommendations that emanated from the awareness workshops will soon be implemented as regulatory provisions (by way of circulars from the Ministry of Tourism):

- Prohibition of all forms of sexual exploitation of children in tourism institutions and at tourist sites;
- Close collaboration with é administrative and police authorities to report suspicious behaviours;

- Organizing training sessions for receptionists of 'hotels, specialized training institutions and community-based stakeholders;
- Permanent awareness activities for tourists by designing a logo to be embossed on travel documents or posted in tourist areas; fliers for distribution in all areas frequented by tourists.
- Informing tourists about prevailing regulations and laws, at the time of booking their travel;
- Introducing telephone hotlines;
- Advocacy to prohibit all forms of suggestive publicity;
- Introducing a training module for judges, the police, and social workers;
- Raising awareness among children and teachers, starting with a pilot exercise in one of the northern provinces;
- MINEDUB and MINESEC preparing modules for family life education and on population, focusing on combating of all forms of violence against children, especially sexual exploitation of children;
- Toll-free numbers ;
- Adopting an ethics code for Cameroonian professionals;
- Raising awareness among parents;
- Ratification of two additional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Updating and validating the National Plan of Action on slavery and sexual exploitation of children.

Furthermore, national NGOs like CASPCAN have carried out studies on sexual abuse in Cameroon, using sex-disaggregated data, (girls: 84.31 per cent, boys 15.39 per cent), types of abuse and other aspects of sexual exploitation of children.

5. Other forms of Abuse and Exploitation such as Begging and early Pregnancy (Article 29 (b))

The following initiatives have been taken:

- A study on violence against children is under approval;
- Violence at school is prohibited pursuant to article 35 of Act 98/004 of 14 April 1998 on educational guidance;
- It is customary in judicial procedures; in particular those concerning violence against children, to take into account the testimony of the child and, above all, the best interests of the child. Measures are taken to ensure that children can express themselves freely in private interviews held in the presence of a social worker.

NGOs and associations working for violence against children are also involved in care.

In the absence of a psychosocial coverage programme for child victims of violence, social workers from the province concerned provide physical and psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration. These may be the social centres and services at police stations, court houses and hospitals.

6. Child Trafficking and Abduction (Article 29)

With its geographical location, Cameroon has been identified as a transit point for child trafficking and the Government is committed to fighting the problem, which has not really gained ground in the interior of country. In this respect, in 2008, MINAS successfully resolved the case of Ghanaian children stranded on the country's coast, until their return to their homeland.

Apart from the 2005 act on child trafficking, decision 00785/DGSN/CAB of 2 December 2005, institutes a special vice squad at the national Interpol central bureau, whose mission is to combat slavery, trafficking, exploitation and violence committed against women and children.

E. Protection against harmful social and cultural practices that affect the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child (article 21)

1. Child Marriage and the Betrothal of Girls and Boys (Article 21.2)

In Cameroon, marriage is founded on the free will of a man and woman to join together as man and wife. The free and solemn consent of the future couple is therefore crucial to the validity of the marriage. This is a major inclusion in the marriage certificate. Article 52, paragraph 4 of marriage ordinance 81/02 of 28 June 1981 stipulates that “no marriage can take place if the future couple does not consent to it”. Cameroonian law is unequivocal about the importance of consent to marriage, to demonstrate its firm opposition to forced marriage. Recognizing marriage as a form of emancipation of the child, legislators have introduced provisions in title VI, chapter III of the above ordinance, to require the consent of the parent(s), guardian(s) or religious leader(s) for marriage of children aged 15 for girls and 18 for boys).

This legal instrument, adopted in 1981 prior to ratification of the Children’s Charter, is under amendment. The possibility of child marriage and parental consent are absent from the preliminary draft child protection code. Consent to marriage, which is still one of the prerogatives of “parental power”, along with the concept of “parental authority over the person of the child” (Book I, Title IV), will thus disappear with the promulgation of the code on the protection of children. Parental power is defined as “a set of rights and duties conferred on the father and mother in the interest of the child”. The father and the mother have parental authority until the child reaches the age of majority or is declared to be of full age, the aim being to ensure the child’s safety, health, morals, education and harmonious development. The only rights and duties which parents have are those of care, supervision and education. Thus, the preliminary draft code on the protection of children, simply by prohibiting the marriage of children, automatically abolishes the right of parents to consent to such marriages.

While the draft child protection code attempts to harmonize national legislation with international instruments, it glosses over the existence of early sex, which must be addressed. Early sex is a fact, which has taken larger proportions with the advent of commercials on condom use as a means of preventing HIV/AIDS, or its alternative, which is remaining faithful to one partner. This has caused sexual depravation and immorality among the youth.

2. Female Genital Mutilation in all Forms (Article 21.1 (a))

The Committee on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has observed that the practice has curtailed considerably in the resistance areas of the Far North, East and South-East. In 1998, Cameroon prepared and implemented a three-pronged strategic plan to combat FGM:

- Prevention, by raising awareness among women who practise FGM, about violation of the rights of their victims as well as their physical integrity; also, among traditional and religious leaders through workshops;
- Care for victims by providing - psychosocial, financial and material support to help in their rehabilitation and enable them to engage in an income-generating activity;
- Punishing perpetrators of FGM. To this end, the Ministry of Justice had proposed an amendment to the Penal Code to introduce punitive measures against FGM; this has still not taken effect.

F. Children from Minority Groups (Article 26)

1. Indigenous Populations and Communities

In Cameroon, instead of the terms “indigenous peoples or tribes” used internationally to refer to categories of people whose way of life is different from that of most people, the concept of “marginal populations” is increasingly becoming the preferred term of the Ministry of Social Affairs’, department responsible for providing support to vulnerable classes and combating social exclusion.

Practically, there is currently no consensual definition of the notion of so-called marginal populations. They are part and parcel of the Cameroonian population. However, they are set apart by their peculiar history, culture and essential and existential cultural patterns.

Their cultural practices, mobility and social distribution are making these people lag behind the institutional way of life. Their social status is due to their departure from the normal way of life, their dogged attachment to their own age-old way of life, which is out of sync with modernity.

While there are several socio-anthropological categories considered as marginal peoples, the pygmies (Baka and Bakola/Bagyéli) and the Mbororos appear principally to be indigenous to Cameroon as defined by the United Nations.

However, the reconstruction and development association of the Moko-oh, a minority people of the North-West, has become affiliated with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to advocate for status as an indigenous people.

The social needs of the marginal populations can be summed up under seven main areas:

- Basic and good quality social services (health, water, electricity, sanitation of the environment)
- School enrolment
- Access to citizenship
- Legal protection
- Communication links
- Social integration
- Socio-professional and economic integration and reintegration

2. Measures to Promote the Rights of Marginalized Populations and other Vulnerable Persons

In Cameroon, the Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of promoting and protecting the rights of marginal populations. However, the other components of Government also contribute to the realization of these goals by way of legal protection and improving their living conditions, while preserving their cultural identity.

Activities to promote and protect the rights of these people are broken down into two main areas - institutional and socioeconomic, as follows:

1. At the Institutional Level

- There is Cameroon's 18 January 1996 Constitution, which recognizes equal rights and duties for all citizens. Article 64 of its preamble (which is part and parcel of the Constitution) stipulates that "The State shall ensure the protection of minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with law".
- In 1984, Cameroon unreservedly ratified the International Pact on Civic and Political Rights;
- As part of its responsibilities to combat social exclusion and draw up programmes for the protection and promotion of the fundamental human rights of marginal populations, MINAS is engaged in the following:
 - Promoting citizenship and participation in society by the Bakas and Mbororos, through issuance of 1,000 birth certificates for the children of those communities;
 - Pursuing development support actions with the help of the project to assist the economic and social development of the Bakas (PADES Baka)

of Djoum, Oveng and Mintom, in the department of Dja and Lobo, the South province, which stems from the cooperation between Cameroon (MINAS) and Belgium (CTB), and which aims to facilitate integration of the Bakas into national life by improving:

- Their health status
 - School enrolment
 - Knowledge and promotion of their civic rights
 - Knowledge and development of their land rights
 - Support to various Baka organizations
- As part of its 2008 roadmap, MINAS has rolled out a number of projects aimed at improving and strengthening legal protection for marginal populations. These projects are:
- A preliminary draft project for a sectoral policy on promoting the rights of and care for marginal populations;
 - A preliminary bill to promote integration of marginal populations in Cameroon.
- Furthermore, other activities to provide technical, material and financial support to associations and NGOs responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of marginalized populations were carried out with the Cameroon Biodiversity Society/Bird Life Cameroon (CBS/BLC); Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA); the Bakas Association of Cameroon (ASBAK-Cameroon); the Centre for Environment and Development (CED) and the Foundation for the Environment in Cameroon;
- On 9 August 2008 and 2009, Cameroon joined the international community to celebrate the 14th and 15th International Day of the World's Indigenous People, which were the first and second official celebrations respectively in Cameroon. The theme for the first celebration was "Marginalized Population: Information and training"; and for the second one, "Marginalized people, rich and diverse cultures, a means to development in the context of globalization".

2. At the Socioeconomic Level

- As part of public assistance to vulnerable persons, MINAS provided material and financial support in response to several requests for medical, school and emergency assistance and equipment. It also provided institutional and placement support, as well as assistance for births among marginal populations;

- Under the “construction of 1,000 health centres” programme, the Ministry of Health built and equipped integrated health and medical centres in regions inhabited by marginal people, to bring preventive and curative care closer to those communities;
- For the protection and promotion of civic rights, special vital statistics centres for the issuance of identity cards were set up in communities with marginal populations;
- The Ministry for Women’s Advancement and Family organized a number of collective marriages for pygmies in the South, who then received national identity cards, marriage certificates and birth certificates for their children;
- The Ministry of Water and Energy built, equipped and rehabilitated wells, boreholes and water sources for the mountain people of the North and Far North, and for the pygmies of the south;
- Environmental legislation under the plan for the indigenous and vulnerable peoples (PPAV) carried out by the national hydrocarbons company under the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project, protects the interests of marginal populations.

Cameroon continues to implement socio-economic integration and protection of children, and so-called marginal populations by:

- Improving their legal status (acquisition of nationality) under a programme for registering the births of children in the North-West, Adamaoua and Baka and Bakola (pygmy) children in the East province; and periodic campaigns to issue national identity cards for young adults. For instance, in the only UNICEF convergence area (Adamaoua province), 3,850 additional rulings were made on birth certificates;
- Promoting income-generating activities for families, to enable them to care better for their children ;
- Awareness to the problem of HIV/AIDS.

Moreover, surveys are carried out in certain areas of these regions to improve awareness about the vulnerable status of the populations in general, and children in particular. As part of HIV/AIDS programmes and projects targeting orphans and vulnerable children, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, Hope for African Children Initiative, Bi-Mult project and the OSIWA project have been identifying and reviewing the needs of this growing category of vulnerable children.

G. Children such as street children and AIDS orphans in need of special protection, owing to their exposure to risks and vulnerability (Article 26)

1. Children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS

In 2005, the national AIDS control committee estimated the number of orphans and vulnerable children at 1,144,565, while the number of AIDS orphans was 112,670. Care for these children is high on the agenda of Government, which has initiated programmes and projects for orphans and vulnerable children, with the cooperation of the international community and civil society. One such project has been developed for 10,000 orphans and vulnerable children with support from the French Cooperation, UNICEF, the Global Fund to Fight Against HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Plan-Cameroon and Care-Cameroon for medical and nutritional support for orphans and vulnerable children. The activities are designed to:

- Facilitate access by orphans and vulnerable children to basic social services like education, healthcare and nutrition);
- Foster the establishment of a legal system for protection;
- Build the capacities of families and communities;
- Implement an institutional framework on protection.

2. Street Children

Government action on care for street children covers two major areas:

- Improving knowledge

Several studies conducted in Cameroon's major cities point to the growing problem of street children. In 1999, there were an estimated 4,000 of them, and today, they number 10,000, spread across the country.

The growing problem is manifest through the number of children encountered among groups already formed since 1999.

The worst affected areas are the major cities, namely, Yaounde, Douala and Ngaoundéré.

Break-up in the family or destabilization of the family circle are the major causes identified by the study.

Two itineraries have are identified:

- The first is of rural origin, where the child leaves his village and goes to the city, and therefore abandons school or does not learn a trade, and then seeks means to make a living. Here, the village is perceived as a place of conflict, which impedes the development of the youth;
- The second is of urban origin, characterized by an unstable economic context, which leads to financial insecurity for displaced families, and unstable and random employment.

This eventually results in separation, divorce and remarriage, which destabilize children and hamper their growth.

Asides these factors, the study notes that street children live under vulnerable conditions and are exposed to risks of exploitation and abuse.

- Improving the living conditions of these children

A crisis centre and a shelter and reintegration centre for street children were set up in Yaoundé under a joint project conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Belgian Red Cross. Under this initiative, 1,052 street children were assisted between 2002 and 2005, of whom 355 were returned to their families, 74 received school aid, 155 were given vocational training and 11 were placed in an institution.

In 2003, the Ministry for Youth started reviving activities for the youth:

- With the national project to support youth reintegration (PRONAI);
- By formulating a national youth policy with support from UNFPA and UNICEF;
- By reviving civic service as part of participation in the national development effort.

X. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHILD (ARTICLE 31)

The Cameroonian child living on Cameroonian soil also has to assume certain duties, by virtue of the inculcation of social prerequisites, which ensure his participation in the development of the nation.

A. Duties of the Child toward Parents, Family and the Community

The child is duty bound to obey and show respect toward his parents and family. He must demonstrate exemplary behaviour, devoid of deviance, and respecting the African tradition, in order to make his community proud. Civil status ordinance 81/02 of 29 June 1981 and the Napoleonic Civil Code applicable to Cameroon, reaffirms some of these duties.

B. Duties toward Supervisors

The child also has duties toward supervisors such as teachers and church ministers. He must be obedient and submit to any punishment that may be meted out to him from time to time, when these are consistent with prevailing regulations and do not violate his integrity.

C. Duties toward the State and the Continent

The Cameroonian child, just like other citizens, must respect the State and its institutions. He must respect the State's emblems, which are, the national anthem, the flag and the motto. He must submit to the laws and regulations in force and strive always to defend the honour of the land and Africa.

To this end, children in basic schools are given lessons on citizenship, with focus on love for the motherland and respect for its institutions.

CONCLUSION

Efforts are being made to implement the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, with focus on the adoption and enactment of laws and regulatory acts, and the establishment of an institutional framework.

Studies have been conducted to improve knowledge about the categories of vulnerable children, such as street children and child victims of sexual or economic exploitation.

The use of data produced has contributed to the formulation of action plans and preparation of legislative and regulatory acts.

Care for orphans and vulnerable children is ongoing, with support from civil society partners and international cooperation.

Efforts should be intensified for service delivery for children.

The functioning of specialized institutions has been dealt a blow, on account of poverty. However, with the legislative, regulatory and institutional framework for children that has been set up, the rights and welfare of children in Cameroon should see a brighter future.