

**Gender Dynamics of the Trafficking in Person Campaign in Cameroon:  
Practicalities, Challenges and the way forward**

Workshop

July 25, 2024

Ministry of Justice, Yaounde

**Organisers**

Ministry of Justice, Republic of Cameroon

Research Unit "The Production and Reproduction of Social Inequalities", Global South Studies Center (GSSC), University of Cologne, Germany

Workshop language: English and French

**Abstract:**

In the past decade, three women from Cameroon have been honoured with the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report Hero Acting to End Modern Slavery Award, an annual recognition by the U.S. State Department for individuals worldwide dedicated to combating human trafficking. These awards underscore both the severity of human trafficking for exploitation and profit and the ongoing fight against it in Cameroon. While trafficking is a global issue, Cameroon's efforts against it have evolved through two phases. The initial phase, from the mid-2000s to 2010, focused on child trafficking within the country, as reflected in the country's 2005 anti-human trafficking law. The subsequent phase, from 2011 onwards, expanded to address trafficking within and beyond Cameroon and covered all age groups. This change was ushered in by the new anti-human trafficking law signed in 2011.

Key stakeholders in Cameroon's anti-trafficking campaign, including government ministries, external partners like the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and local NGOs, generally agree that the first phase saw significant success. For instance, there was heightened scrutiny on the practice of sending children from villages to live with relatives or "acquaintances" who promised an education in exchange for domestic work—a practice used by some to exploit children. More than ten years into the second phase of the campaign, the severity of the problem persists, particularly amid ongoing security crises in parts of Cameroon. Reports and studies highlight that the most alarming cases of trafficking in Cameroon involve women and children.<sup>1</sup> While it is unclear why the second phase of the campaign so far has not achieved the success of the first phase, stakeholders agree that the 2011 anti-trafficking law has some limitations that need to be addressed. This acknowledgement is reflected in ongoing discussions among stakeholders about revising the law.

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<sup>1</sup> Aziza, M. 2017. An Empirical Study of Human Trafficking Law in Cameroon: Victims Rarely Seek Justice and Traffickers Are Not Held Liable *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 25(3): 430-441.  
Nkwi, W. G. 2018. "Return Youth Migrants in Cameroon: Understanding the other side of bushfalling, 1990-2015. In: J. Takougang and J.A. Amin (eds.). *Post-Colonial Cameroon: Politics, economy, and society*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 375-392.

TIP (Trafficking in Persons) report of the United States Department for Cameroon. 2023.  
<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/country/cameroon-topical>

This workshop aims to achieve two objectives: First, to critically evaluate the current anti-trafficking campaign's impact on common practices facilitating trafficking in Cameroon, particularly among women. Second, to identify effective initiatives in curtailing trafficking in persons. To accomplish these goals, we pose the following questions:

- What impact has the current anti-trafficking campaign had on prevalent practices, including entrenched traditions, enabling trafficking in Cameroon?
- What lessons can we glean from the successful first phase of the anti-trafficking campaign in Cameroon, and why hasn't similar success been replicated in the second phase?
- What tangible changes can be made to the 2011 anti-trafficking law, and what impact could they have?

The intended outputs of the workshop include a policy brief co-authored with workshop participants, which will analyse the successes and failures of the second phase of the anti-trafficking campaign as well as suggest ways forward.

**Preliminary Programme:**

*One-day workshop, 25 July 2024*

*Location: Ministry of Justice, Yaoundé*

09:00 – 10:00	Official Workshop Opening
10:00 – 12:00	MINJUSTICE: Perspectives on international, regional and national legal frameworks on Trafficking in Persons MINAS: Care for Victims
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break
13:00 – 14:00	Justice Kembo Hermine: Presentation of her book “Human Trafficking and Smuggling in Cameroonian Courts” Dr. Jonathan Ngeh/Prof. Dr. Michaela Pelican: Preliminary findings of ongoing research on trafficking in persons and slavery in Cameroon
14:00 – 16:00	Group work and presentation of results (will be included in policy brief)
16:00 – 17:00	Final discussion and closing