



WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

CONTRIBUTION OF WILPF CAMEROON TO THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM



Report submitted to the UPR Working Group 30th session (May 2018) on 5 October 2017

This report was developed by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Cameroon section, in short WILPF Cameroon, in consultation with members and focal points of WILPF Cameroon in the Central, Littoral, Eastern and Western regions of Cameroon, as well as based on interviews with various relevant stakeholders in Cameroon regarding the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

The development of this report was made possible thanks to the financial support of the Channel Foundation and through collaboration with WILPF International, which supported its drafting, editing, and publication.

In partnership with



Table of contents

1. Introduction of WILPF Cameroon	03
2. The Preceding Cycles	04
3. Arms Control	05
4. Gender-based Violence.	06
5. Political and Socio-Economic Participation of Women	07
6. Participation of Women in Conflict Prevention and Resolution	08
7. Birth Registration	09
8. Protection of Persons in Humanitarian Situations.	10

Credits

©2018 Women's International League for
Peace and Freedom
www.wilpf.org

Title: Women, Peace and Security, Contribution
of WILPF Cameroon to the Universal Periodic
Review

March 2018, 10pp
First Edition

Drafters: Nathalie Wokam Foko,
Guy Blaise Feugap, Sylvie Jacqueline Ndongmo

Original version in French

Editor of the English version: Jenny Leigh
Design and Layout: Nadia Joubert

Cover photo: Gaelle Marcel

1 | Introduction of WILPF Cameroon

Since its creation in 2014, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Cameroon section, has focused on furthering the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Cameroon. WILPF Cameroon also carries out awareness raising and advocacy actions on the theme, especially regarding the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and related resolutions.¹ In this framework, WILPF Cameroon is also working to ensure the implementation of legal instruments regulating illegal arms trade and proliferation. These agreements include: the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the United Nations Program on Light and Small Arms (UNPOA), and the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention).

Cameroon is currently facing a number of security threats due to the circulation and illicit traffic of arms, as well as the insurrection

of Boko Haram. These events led WILPF Cameroon to carry out a study in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family and other partners on the level of knowledge of Resolution 1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on women and girls. The aim was to build on the study to



Meeting between WILPF Cameroon and Ms. Françoise Bekono, Assistant Director in charge of the social promotion of women at the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family, surrounded by her colleagues.
- Picture by WILPF Cameroon

elaborate the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of Resolution 1325.² The conclusions of this study form, to a great extent, the recommendations made in this document.

¹ 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) et 2122 (2013).

² Rapport de l'Etude de base pour l'élaboration du Plan d'Action de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et des Résolutions connexes au Cameroun, Février 2017, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Cameroon (the English version of the report is not available yet).

2 | The Preceding Cycles

The situation of women's rights in Cameroon remains problematic and attracts the interest of both public and private sectors. Twenty-six recommendations relating to women's rights were made to Cameroon at the end of the previous cycles of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in a bid to improve conditions for women.³ Cameroon accepted 24 of these recommendations and has committed to

implementing those related to gender-based violence. In this regard, the adoption of the new penal code that criminalises several acts of violence against women, the adoption of the National Gender Policy (2015), and the multi-sectorial action plan of the implementation of the National Gender Policy 2016-2020 constitute important milestones.

Meanwhile, harmful traditional cultural practices against women and problems with the implementation of laws and policies remain causes for concern. Both acts of gender-based violence and the precarious socio-economic situation of women are increasing, along with violations to the right to identity. In addition, the level of insecurity in the country and the massive influx of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of Boko Haram's insurgency and cross-border conflicts, as well as the illicit circulation of arms, are becoming increasingly alarming.



Sylvie Ndongmo, WILPF Cameroon's President, during the validation workshop of the draft of the present report organised with civil society organisations working on peace issues.
- Picture by WILPF Cameroon

³ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Cameroon, A/HRC/11/21, 12 October 2009, recommendations 13 (South Africa), 13 (France), 16 (Turkey), 17 (Mexico), 17 (Malaysia), 17 (Pakistan), 36 (France); Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Cameroon, A/HRC/24/15, 5 July 2013, recommendations 131.39 (Costa Rica), 131.40 (Belgium), 131.43 (United Kingdom), 131.47 (France), 131.48 (Cambodia), 131.50 (Mexico), 131.51 (Poland), 131.52 (Moldova), 131.53 (South Africa), 131.69 (Niger), 131.83 (Bulgaria), 131.117 (Thailand), 131.24 (China), 131.129 (Malaysia), 131.30 (Netherlands), 131.31 (Nigeria), 131.132 (Russia), 131.142 (Brazil), 131.63 (Oman).

3 | Arms Control

Insurrections led by Boko Haram, cross-border conflicts and organised crime turn Cameroon into a fertile ground for the massive circulation of arms, which constitutes a permanent threat to peace. A high proportion of the total number of arms in Cameroon is illicitly owned.⁴ These illegally owned arms are most commonly used in committing acts of crime and in poaching. Between two-thirds and four-fifths are either produced locally or come in from Nigeria.⁵ From the study conducted by WILPF Cameroon, it emerged that the proliferation of arms is one of the factors that exacerbates insecurity and leads to an increased number of conflicts in Cameroon.⁶ Armed conflicts involving terrorist uprisings were classified as the fifth most

common type of conflict affecting communities in Cameroon.⁷

Law no 2016/015 of 14th December 2016, elaborating on the general principles on arms and munitions in Cameroon, is a step forward regarding arms controls. However, as opposed to the ATT that Cameroon signed on 3rd December 2014,⁸ this law does not take into account a gender perspective in its provisions. Moreover, the Kinshasa Convention, ratified by Cameroon in January 2015, and the law of 14th December 2016, provide that a national commission on small arms and light weapons be put in place. To date, very little progress has been made in establishing this commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- By 2019, ratify and implement, taking into account a gender perspective, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Action Programme of the United Nations on Light and Small Arms and the Central African Convention for the Control of Light and Small Arms;
- Adopt implementing decrees of law No 2016/015 of 14th December 2016 on the general rules governing arms and ammunition in Cameroon by December 2018 and carry out awareness raising activities with the public relating to this law, throughout the national territory and in partnership with civil society;
- Put in place, as early as possible, the National Commission on Light and Small Arms with the allocation of adequate human and financial resources.

⁴ Evaluation sur les armes légères pour les Etats du Sahel et les pays limitrophes, UNREC-PNUD 2015, P.9 (the English version of the report is not available yet).

⁵ Rapport de l'Etude de base pour l'élaboration du Plan d'Action de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et des Résolutions connexes au Cameroun, Février 2017, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Cameroon (the English version of the report is not available yet).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Article 7 (4) of the Arms Trade Treaty provides that when making export-related assessments: "The exporting State Party, in making this assessment, shall take into account the risk of the conventional arms covered under Article 2 (1) or of the items covered under Article 3 or Article 4 being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of genderbased violence or serious acts of violence against women and children".

4 | Gender-based Violence

Despite the creation of “call centres”, put in place to listen to victims of gender-based violence in four regions of the country, women victims of sexual or domestic violence are not always well cared for by public services. During the second cycle of the UPR of Cameroon in 2013, Cameroon committed to continue taking measures to promote women’s rights, for example, the elaboration of a bill on the prevention and fight against violence towards women.⁹

Unfortunately, this law has not been adopted, despite some aspects being included in the new penal code. The absence of a general criminalisation of domestic violence and of marital rape constitute major gaps in the protection of women’s rights.¹⁰ Moreover, the reform of the civil code, which contains discriminatory provisions against women, has been awaited for 20 years now.¹¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take measures for the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of African Women;
- By 2020, adopt and implement a specific law to prevent and fight against all forms of violence against women, including marital rape, followed by education and awareness raising programs to the attention of the public about domestic violence;
- By 2020, reinforce and ensure the organisation of 100 training sessions of the judiciary and of court officers at the national, regional and local levels, regarding the support to, and the rights of victims of gender-based violence, including of domestic violence;
- Extend the creation of call centres and of free phone help lines for victims of gender-based violence all over the national territory;
- By the end of 2018, finalise, as a priority, the on going revision of the civil code and the drafting of a code of the person and the family with a view to bringing its legislation in conformity with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and of ensuring that all discriminatory provisions are repealed.

⁹ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Cameroon, A/HRC/24/15, 5 July 2013, recommendations 131.48 (Cambodia).

¹⁰ Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Follow-up letter sent to the State Party, 26 April 2017, available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fFUL%2fCM R%2f27288&Lang=en.

¹¹ Extracts from article 1421 et 1428 of the Civil Code “Le mari administre seul les biens de la communauté. Il peut les vendre, aliéner et hypothéquer sans le concours de la femme” ; “Le mari a l’administration de tous les biens personnels de la femme. Il peut exercer seul toutes les actions mobilières et possessoires qui appartiennent à la femme” (English version not available).

5 | Political and Socio-Economic Participation of Women

Women's representation in politics in Cameroon is very low. Apart from the National Assembly where there is considerable progress with 30,5% of women, other institutions are lagging behind: Government 6%, the Senate 21%, and Municipal Councils 8%.¹² In social and economic matters, the salaries of men and women remain unequal, especially in the private sector. The majority of women work in subsistence agriculture, in informal sectors and are under-employed. Yet, following its second UPR cycle, Cameroon committed to increase by 30% and by 2017, the representation of women in decision making positions in public, quasi-public and private enterprises, as well as in elective positions.¹³



Validation workshop of the draft of the present report organised with civil society organisations working on peace issues. - Picture by WILPF Cameroon

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take appropriate measures, including special temporary measures, to ensure women's equal representation in the private sector and in political and public life at the national, regional and local levels including, in Government in decision-making positions, in Parliament, in the judiciary and in the civil service;¹⁴
- Implement gender-sensitive budgeting in all areas with the aim of realising Sustainable Development Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

¹² Ministère de la Promotion de la Femmes et de la Famille (Palmarès genre), Rapport Orphée 2015 (English version not available).

¹³ Addendum au rapport du Cameroun au sujet des positions du pays concernant les recommandations issues du second cycle de l'examen périodique universel, Engagements du Cameroun pour la mise en œuvre des recommandations page 21, disponible sur : https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/cameroon/session_16_-_april_2013/ahrc2415add.1f.pdf (English version not available).

¹⁴ Recommandation based on a recommendation made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Cameroon, CEDAW/C/CMR/CO/4-5, paragraphs 23 a) and b), available at : http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CEDAW%2fC%2fCMR%2fCO%2f4-5&Lang=en

6 | Participation of Women in Conflict Prevention and Resolution

In Cameroon, women are the first victims of conflict (30.39%) followed by children (17.13%).¹⁵ Only 4.21% of the population perceive women as actors in conflict management.¹⁶ Most mechanisms and peace processes in Cameroon do not include women and, furthermore, relegate them to the status of victims. This highlights a great need for capacity building of all key actors and for more light to be shed on the particular, specific and considerable contribution of women in conflict resolution processes.

The four regions of Cameroon that are in conflict-plagued zones are the: Far North, East, South West and North West. Women in

these regions are affected in major ways by the conflicts.¹⁷ Women are mainly victims of physical and sexual violence while young girls are used in suicide bomb attacks. According to the UNICEF, since January 2014, 117 children—of whom 80% were girls—have been used in suicide attacks in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.¹⁸ Yet, 17 years after the UNSC adopted Resolution 1325, which recognises the disproportionate impact of armed conflicts on women and girls and recommends including women in all peace processes and decision making, Cameroon does not have a National Action Plan for the implementation of this resolution yet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Finalise, publicise and implement the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 by December 2018, with the allocation of adequate human and financial resources;
- Ensure the effective participation of women in the prevention of conflict, in peace efforts and post-conflict reconstruction, including involving them in decision making positions in accordance with resolution 1325 and connected resolutions, 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013);
- Put in place a peace education programme to build sustainable peace;
- By 2020, train at least 500 women, including traditional, civil society and political leaders from all regions of Cameroon, on conflict mediation techniques;
- Adopt prevention measures to the recruitment of young girls as suicide bombers by Boko Haram, including through measures to fight against the radicalisation of youths.

¹⁵ Rapport de l'Étude de base pour l'élaboration du Plan d'Action de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et des Résolutions connexes au Cameroun, Février 2017, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom/Cameroon (English version of the report not available yet).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Silent shame: Bringing out the voices of children caught in the Lake Chad crisis, UNICEF, available at: https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/nigeriaregionalcrisis/UNICEF_Silent_shame.pdf

7 | Birth Registration

The non-declaration of births and the possession of invalid birth certificates constitute violations of the right to an identity and nationality in Cameroon. This violation of the right to identity leads to a hindrance in exercising many rights, such as the right to quality education, to citizenship, etc. It also constitutes an additional obstacle to the participation of women and girls in public and political life.

A study conducted from August 2014 to June 2015 in 477 kindergartens and primary schools in the Littoral region revealed that 27,273 children (5.4 %) did not have birth certificates.¹⁹ In the same period, in the North of the country, more than 200,000 children under the age of 15 were also identified as being without birth certificates.²⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Computerise the national civil registry by 2020;
- Increase the financial, technical and human resources of the national civil status office in order to increase its accessibility throughout the national territory and accelerate its activities to reduce, as quickly as possible, the percentage of the population without birth certificates;²¹
- Adopt and implement a simplified procedure to obtain substitute birth certificates and expand mobile court hearings throughout the national territory in order to facilitate access of the public;
- Strengthen awareness raising campaigns encouraging parents to register births;²²
- Ensure the effective implementation of art. 31 of law No 2011/011 requiring heads of hospitals or doctors to declare births, in order to reduce corruption in the process of delivery or establishment of birth certificates.²³

¹⁹ Projet d'information et de sensibilisation des citoyens sur des formalités et obligations spécifiques en vue de la réhabilitation de l'état civil, Douala 2015. Financé par l'Union Européenne (English version of the report not available).

²⁰ Etude diagnostic sur la situation de délivrance des actes d'Etat civil dans le Département de la Bénoué, 2014-2015. (English version of the report not available)

²¹ Recommendation based on Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Cameroon, CRC/C/CMR/CO/3-5, 6 July 2017, paragraph 19 b), available at : http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CRC/C/CMR/CO/3-5&Lang=En

²² Recommendation based on Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Cameroon, CRC/C/CMR/CO/3-5, 6 July 2017, paragraph 19 c), available at : http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CRC/C/CMR/CO/3-5&Lang=En

²³ Ordonnance de Loi n° 2011/011 du 6 mai 2011 modifiant et complétant certaines dispositions de l'ordonnance n° 81-02 du 29 juin 1981 portant organisation de l'état civil et diverses dispositions relatives à l'état des personnes physiques, Art. 31 – (nouveau) (1) « Lorsque l'enfant est né dans un établissement hospitalier, le chef dudit établissement ou à défaut, le médecin ou toute personne qui a assisté la mère, est tenu de déclarer la naissance de l'enfant dans les trente jours suivant l'accouchement. » (English version not available)

8 | Protection of Persons in Humanitarian Situations

More than 550,000 persons have been displaced due to conflicts in Cameroon.²⁴ The most affected regions are the Far North, North, Adamawa and the East. The needs are enormous and the means insufficient. Socio-cultural barriers hinder adherence to awareness raising measures and legal support to the displaced remains insufficient. Moreover, the shrinking space to welcome refugees and the forced returns of Nigerians in Cameroon back to their country are major causes of concern regarding the protection of refugees.²⁵



Validation workshop of the draft of the present report organised with civil society organisations working on peace issues.
- Picture by WILPF Cameroon

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase resources made available for refugees, internally displaced persons and populations in conflict zones;
- Reinforce the protection of refugee and internally displaced women and girls, taking into consideration their specific needs and also ensuring they have equitable access to shelter and services, including to education, training and health, as well as to protection measures against gender-based violence.

²⁴ Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2017 au Cameroun, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Décembre 2016, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroun-aper-u-des-besoins-humanitaires-2017-d-cembre-2016> (English version of the report not available)

²⁵ Ibid.

