



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	CAMEROON
Title	Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)
Reference period	1 January 2022 to 15 March 2024
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Prevalence of THB; main profiles of victims of traffickingPrevalence of re-trafficking; main profiles of victims of re-traffickingLegal frameworkTreatment and perception of victims of THB by society (including family)Availability of state protectionAvailability and access to support services, including medical services, for victims of THB particularly in Kribi, Dschang and Douala
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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Cameroon

Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

1. Prevalence of THB; main profiles of victims of trafficking

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), trafficking in human beings in Cameroon affected ‘nationals, including IDPs, as well as refugees and migrants’.¹ The same report mentioned the lack of available data on movements of victims of THB taken from Cameroon to other countries in West Africa, Europe and the Middle East, among other regions.²

The United States Department of State (USDOS) in 2023 noted that the government does not keep a database of trafficking crimes and as such, the available figures are ‘likely’ underreported.³ In 2022, Cameroon identified ‘12 confirmed trafficking victims and an additional 23 potential trafficking victims’ whereas the previous year no confirmed victims were identified and 90 ‘potential trafficking victims’.⁴ The 12 victims (nine Cameroonians and three Vietnamese) of THB confirmed by Cameroon in 2022, were six adult women and six children, of whom six were exploited in ‘sex trafficking’ and six in ‘labor trafficking’.⁵ NGOs identified and assisted ‘at least’ 201 victims.⁶ USDOS reported that the government proceeded with ‘screening vulnerable populations’ to identify trafficking indicators, in particular in case of migrant workers at the airports.⁷

Freedom House reported in 2023 that Cameroon was a source country for forced labor and prostitution of women in Europe and a ‘transit, and destination country for forced labor and sex trafficking of children’.⁸ The ENACT Africa Organised Crime Index⁹ noted that Cameroon was a ‘source, transit, and destination country’ where individuals, including men, women, and children, were subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.¹⁰ The same source pointed out that the collaboration of local facilitators with international actors exacerbated trafficking in

¹ UNHCR, Mapping of protection services for vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking - On routes toward the Central and Western Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic (July 2022), 29 July 2022, [url](#), p. 31

² UNHCR, Mapping of protection services for vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking - On routes toward the Central and Western Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic (July 2022), 29 July 2022, [url](#), p. 31

³ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁶ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁷ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#)

⁹ Enhancing Africa’s capacity to respond more effectively to transnational organised crime (ENACT) is a EU programme focused on mitigating the impact of transnational organised crime in Africa. The ENACT Organised Crime Index is a multi-dimensional tool that measures both the level of countries’ criminality and their resilience to organised crime. Africa - Organised Crime Index, About the Index, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#), p. 3



human beings.¹¹ Other elements that contributed to the situation of THB in Cameroon were conflicts in the country that lead to ‘large numbers of displaced individuals’, limited presence of police forces and the judiciary, and ‘a disrupted economy and educational system’.¹²

Cameroon was on the 16th place on a regional list for Africa consisting of 50 countries in the Global Slavery Index 2023, published in June 2023.¹³ In relation to Cameroon’s population of 26.5 million people, 155 000 people were estimated to be victims of modern slavery, according to the index.¹⁴

UNHCR noted that there were ‘very few cases of human trafficking’ in Garoua-Boulai.¹⁵

1.1 Main profiles of victims of trafficking

USDOS reported that people belonging to disadvantaged classes, especially from rural areas, were exploited by traffickers into sex and labor trafficking in destinations such as the Middle East, Thailand, Europe, the US and African countries.¹⁶ The predominant regions of origin of individuals exploited abroad were identified in the report as ‘the Northwest, Southwest, Littoral, Center, South, and West’, and people between 20 to 38 years old were the most affected.¹⁷ USDOS reported that Cameroonian women were recruited by ‘fraudulent labor brokers’ to work in the Middle East doing domestic work, but in the destination they were exploited for ‘sex trafficking or domestic servitude’.¹⁸ One of the outcomes of the survey for the Global Slavery Index 2023 reflected that ‘all respondents in Cameroon’ saw their passport seized in Lebanon and in Kuwait, which further complicated their return.¹⁹

THB in the country primarily affects economically vulnerable and marginalized groups, including internally displaced persons and refugees.²⁰

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) reported that Cameroonian women were among the nationalities of migrants that upon arrival in Cyprus ‘and countries in southeast Europe’ are reportedly trafficked and forced into ‘prostitution in private apartments, bars, and nightclubs’ by violent African criminal groups.²¹ International criminal actors

¹¹ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹² ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹³ Walk Free, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 78

¹⁴ Walk Free, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 78

¹⁵ UNHCR, Mapping of protection services for vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking - On routes toward the Central and Western Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic (July 2022), 29 July 2022, [url](#), p. 32

¹⁶ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹ Walk Free, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 111

²⁰ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²¹ Frontex, Risk Analysis for 2023/2024, 18 September 2023, [url](#), p. 38



operating in Cameroon were reported as enabling trafficking in human beings by providing ‘visas with little oversight’.²²

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) noted in the Consolidated Emergency Report 2022 published in 2023 that ‘child labor (including becoming domestic workers) and exposure to human traffickers’ together with the lack of an organised response to reported THB in the Littoral region constituted challenges to child protection.²³

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) were reported to experience ‘an apparent rise’ in being trafficked for labor or domestic work.²⁴ The unstable economic situation of IDPs and their limited possibilities to resort to formal justice were among the reasons why traffickers exploited them.²⁵

Children were reported as trafficked via the Gulf of Guinea to Cote d’Ivoire to be exploited in cocoa farming.²⁶ Additionally, children trying to make a living in the streets, in particular, in Yaoundé, those from disadvantaged areas or whose parents wanted to move them away from areas affected by violence and offer them better opportunities were more prone to the risks of THB.²⁷ Moreover, children who were separated from their families and hosted by local communities faced the threat of ‘falling victims of traffickers’.²⁸

2. Prevalence of re-trafficking; main profiles of victims of re-trafficking

Information on re-trafficking in Cameroon and the main profiles of victims was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

USDOS when referring to the composition of trafficking networks reported that ‘generally’ these included community leaders, religious leaders, and individuals who were victims of trafficking.²⁹ Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints.

3. Legal framework

Laws addressing the issue of THB in Cameroon include the Law Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery and the Penal Code.³⁰ More specifically, trafficking in human beings is a crime in Cameroon under the Law No 2011/024 of 14 December 2011 Relating to the

²² ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²³ UNICEF, Republic of Cameroon Consolidated Emergency Report 2022, 2023, [url](#), p. 17

²⁴ UNOCHA, Cameroon - Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 61

²⁵ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁶ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁷ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁸ UNOCHA, Cameroon - Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 63

²⁹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁰ ISHR, Cameroon: Human trafficking, n.d., [url](#); USDOL, 2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Cameroon, 26 September 2023, [url](#)



Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery,³¹ and under Section 342-1 of the Cameroon Penal Code.³²

Chapter II on ‘Offences and Punishment’ of Law No 2011/024 of 14 December 2011 Relating to the Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery indicates the following:

‘SECTION 3:

1) Whoever subjects a person to debt bondage shall be punished with imprisonment for from 5 (five) to 10 (ten) years and a fine of from 10 000 (ten thousand) [about EUR 15] to 500 000 (five hundred thousand) CFA francs [about EUR 760].

2) The penalties provided for in Section 3 (1) above shall be doubled where the offender is either an ascendant, a guardian or a person having even custody over the victim.

3) Whoever boards a person in debt bondage shall be punished with imprisonment for 10 (ten) years and with fine of from 10 000 (ten thousand) [about EUR 15] to 1 000 000 (one million) CFA francs [about EUR 1 521].

SECTION 4: Whoever engages even occasionally in the practice of trafficking in persons or slavery shall be punished with imprisonment of from 10 (ten) to 20 (twenty) years and with fine of from 50 000 (fifty thousand) [about EUR 76] to 1 000 000 (one million) [about EUR 1 521] CFA francs.

SECTION 5: Whoever engages in trafficking in persons and slavery shall be punished with imprisonment for from 15 (fifteen) to 20 (twenty) years and with fine of from 100 000 (one hundred thousand) [about EUR 152] to 10 000 000 (ten million) [about EUR 15 245] CFA francs where:

- The offence is committed against a minor of 15 years;
- The perpetrator is a legitimate, natural or adopted ascendant of the victim;
- The offender has authority over the victim or is expected to participate by virtue of his duties in the fight against slavery or peace keeping;
- The offence is committed by an organized gang or an association.’³³

Section 342-1 on ‘Trafficking and Slavery of Persons’ of the Cameroon Penal Code indicates the following:

‘(1) Whoever engages even occasionally in the practice of trafficking in persons or slavery shall be punished with imprisonment for from 10 (ten) to 20 (twenty) years and

³¹ Cameroon, Law No 2011/024 of 14 December 2011 relating to the fight against trafficking in persons, 14 December 2011, [url](#)

³² Cameroon, Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 Relating to the Penal Code, 12 July 2016, [url](#)

³³ Cameroon, Law No 2011/024 of 14 December 2011 relating to the fight against trafficking in persons, 14 December 2011, [url](#), Section 3-5



with fine of from CFAF 50 000 (fifty thousand) [about EUR 76] to CFAF 1 000 000 (one million) [about EUR 1 524].³⁴

According to USDOS, legislation in the country on THB did not comply with international law since 'Cameroon's legal framework continued to require a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion to constitute a child sex trafficking crime, and therefore did not criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking.'³⁵ The same source noted that a Bill proposed in 2012 aimed 'to address victim and witness protection and correct inconsistencies with international law' has been pending for a decade.³⁶

4. Treatment and perception of victims of THB by society (including family)

Information on treatment and perception of victims of THB by society could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

5. Availability of state protection

According to a Cameroonian magistrate cited by International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the legal framework concerning THB in Cameroon was incomplete as it did not include 'provisions for prevention, victim support and cooperation.'³⁷ Similarly, the ENACT Africa Organised Crime Index reported that the government lacked a structured approach to support and protect trafficked victims who participated in investigations or prosecutions, including through the provision of counselling, legal aid, and other forms of assistance.³⁸ In the 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report on Cameroon, USDOS noted that although the government 'slightly increased' efforts to protect victims of THB, 'protection services for victims remained limited'.³⁹ For instance, USDOS reported that some victims chose to settle potential trafficking cases outside of the formal court system due to a lack of protection and the length of criminal proceedings.⁴⁰ The same report described the state's effort to prosecute THB crimes as 'marginal'.⁴¹ Furthermore, the government did not take any action against officials implicated in THB and 'corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns'.⁴²

³⁴ Cameroon, Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 Relating to the Penal Code, 12 July 2016, [url](#), Section 3

³⁵ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁷ IOM, Trafficking in Persons: Call "1503" to Report Cases in Cameroon, 29 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁸ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³⁹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴² USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

6. Availability and access to support services, including medical services, for victims of THB particularly in Kribi, Dschang and Douala

Information on availability and access to support services for victims of THB particularly in Kribi, Dschang, and Douala was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

UNHCR reported in July 2022 that in the city of Doula and Wouri department and in Garoua-Boulai there were ‘no specific services for victims of trafficking’.⁴³ The report noted that in Yaoundé, IOM and the Ministry for Social Affairs (MINAS, *Ministère des Affaires Sociales*) were jointly working on a referral mechanism addressed to victims of trafficking,⁴⁴ however it did not provide further details and additional information about the mechanism could not be found within time constraints of this query response. In 2022 a toll-free number 1503⁴⁵ was established by IOM and MINAS to report cases of trafficking in human beings, in particular for ‘migrants, refugees, displaced and uprooted persons, including victims of trafficking’.⁴⁶

The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) was charged with the implementation of a two-year project ‘Providing Assistance and Protection to Vulnerable Victims of Trafficking in the Northwest, Littoral and Centre Regions of Cameroon’, with funding from the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) targeting ‘young girls and boys, women and men who are survivors of human trafficking’, running in the period of 2022-2023.⁴⁷ Under the project, CHRDA reported on providing humanitarian assistance to victims of THB in July 2022 in the Littoral Region⁴⁸ and in October 2022 in Yaoundé⁴⁹. On 27 May 2023, CHRDA reported that it managed to bring victims of human trafficking together with their families.⁵⁰

In 2022, 32 victims of THB received government support at six centers run by the MINAS, located in Yaoundé, Douala, and Betamba, covering shelter, basic needs, psychosocial support, health care, and family reunification assistance.⁵¹ NGOs working on the provision of assistance to victims of THB in Cameroon received some support from the government, including in the form of subsidies addressed to organisations, partners of the MINAS, that ‘provided temporary shelter to trafficking survivors, children, and women’.⁵²

⁴³ UNHCR, Mapping of protection services for vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking - On routes toward the Central and Western Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic (July 2022), 29 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 33, 36

⁴⁴ UNHCR, Mapping of protection services for vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking - On routes toward the Central and Western Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic (July 2022), 29 July 2022, [url](#), p. 32

⁴⁵ IOM, Trafficking in Persons: Call “1503” to Report Cases in Cameroon, 29 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶ UNHCR, Mapping of protection services for vulnerable people on the move, including victims of trafficking - On routes toward the Central and Western Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic (July 2022), 29 July 2022, [url](#), p. 32

⁴⁷ CHRDA, Reuniting Human Trafficking Survivors in Yaoundé, 29 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸ CHRDA, CHRDA provides assistance to survivors of human trafficking in the Littoral Region of Cameroon, 27 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹ CHRDA, CHRDA provides humanitarian aid to survivors of human trafficking in Yaoundé, the Centre Region of Cameroon, 8 October 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰ CHRDA, Reuniting Human Trafficking Survivors in Yaoundé, 29 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵² USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

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ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED

ACAPS; Actu Cameroun; Amnesty International; Anti-Slavery International; Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); Bertelsmann Stiftung; Cameroun - Ministère des Affaires Sociales; Ministère de la Justice; Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; Global Initiative; GLOWA Cameroon; Human Rights Watch; Human Trafficking Foundation; International Crisis Group; International Society for Human Rights; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; Survivors' Network; Sustain Cameroon; Switzerland, Swiss Refugee Council; United Nations – Human Rights Council; International Labour Organization; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.