

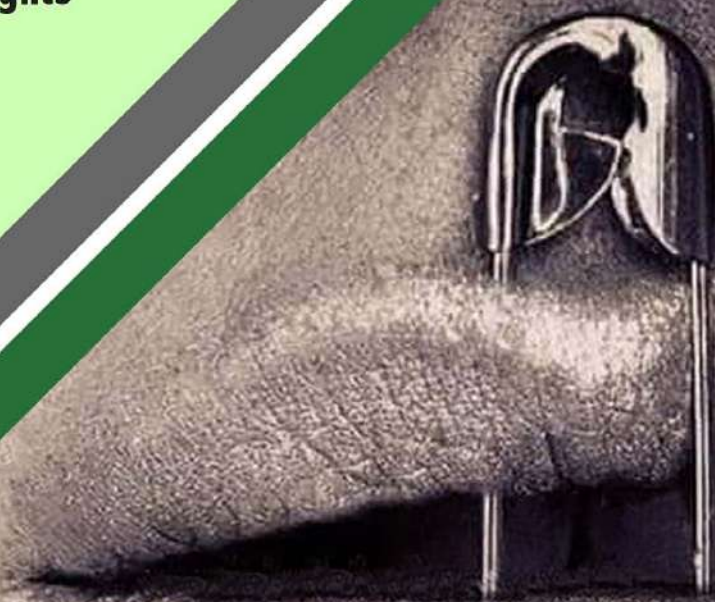


**Human Rights
Defenders Network
in Central Africa**



**Centre for Human Rights
and Democracy in Africa
CHRD**
promoting and defending human rights and democracy

▶ **Study on the situation of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, in particular Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), other Vulnerable Human Rights Defenders (VHRDs), girls, journalists, internally displaced persons and LGBTQIA defenders**



***For an inclusive protection of Human Rights Defenders,
women, young people, exiles and internally displaced persons:
OUR MOTTO!***

**English Version
2022**



**British
High Commission
Yaoundé**

DEDICATIONS

To MOWHA Franklin, our collaborator who has been missing since August 06, 2018.

To the Women Human Rights Defenders of the North West and South West regions that REDHAC has supported:



Magdaline AGBOR



Sally MAFORCHI



Frida BAIYE



Parchibel FECKA



Adah Mbah Muya

As well as:

- Geraldine LOSHA
- Esther OMAM
- Stéphanie MOWHA

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SUMMARY

Through their actions, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels, notably by collecting and disseminating information and denouncing the failure of States and other actors to comply with their obligations to promote and respect human rights.

While they do important work to promote and protect human rights, HRDs often do so at the cost of many risks. These risks are aggravated when it comes to Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) or defenders belonging to vulnerable groups, both because of their social status and because of the sensitive issues on which they work. The WHRDs are distinguished by their significant representation in the promotion process, both because of their social status and because of the sensitive issues on which they work. The WHRDs are distinguished by their significant representation in the promotion and protection of women's rights and rights related to gender and sexuality.

As a follow-up to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) report on HRDs, this study highlights the specific violations and challenges faced by HRDs in the Northwest and Southwest regions and the

legal context that undermines or protects HRDs in their work.

This study focuses on the two regions of Cameroon: the Northwest and Southwest in the context of the socio-political crisis. Data was collected based on a questionnaire that was made available to the following groups: WHRDs, VHRDs, CSOs and key partners working on HRD protection issues.

The recommendations presented at the end of the study are levers for an appropriate response to the problems of HRDs and HRDFs identified on the basis of the questionnaire/interview guide focusing on:

- The legal vacuum or insufficiency in domestic law for the protection of HRDs, including WHRDs and VHRDs;
- The non-existence in domestic law of a clear and recognized legal status for HRDs, including WHRDs and VHRDs;
- The lack of knowledge by the majority of Human Rights Defenders of international and regional texts protecting HRDs;
- The existence of internal laws that hinder the work of WHRDs and other VHRDs;
- The authoritarian drifts under the cover of the anti-terrorist fight that repress the rights of the WHRDs and the VHRDs;

- The lack of dynamism and ignorance by Human Rights Defenders of the mechanism in charge in Cameroon of the follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms and particularly those of the ACHPR;
- The insufficiency of financial resources allocated to the NHRI in Cameroon;
- The non-binding nature of the recommendations, findings and observations of the ACHPR;
- The lack of visibility of the actions of the ACHPR;
- The reluctance of the State to comply with the requirements of the African human rights system;
- The reluctance of the State to domesticate the 1998 UN Declaration on HRDs through the adoption of a national law.

These recommendations aim to improve the working situation of both HRDs and HRDs in general.

Commissioned by REDHAC, this study is part of the implementation of the program: ***"Contribute to the legal protection of Human Rights Defenders and journalists, especially young girls and women in Cameroon: Our Collective Responsibility!"» In acronym ProtectHRDs***

PREFACE



**Hon. Commissioner
Rémy NGOY LUMBU**

President of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa, Focal Point for Retaliation - President of the REDHAC Board of Directors.

I am very enthusiastic and happy to write the preface to this study, which is entitled ***"For an inclusive protection of human rights defenders, women, youth, exiles and internally displaced persons: OUR DESIRE!"*** This study is part of a long list of documents that are just as important in their content and that should be credited to REDHAC, directed by Maximilienne Ngo MBE, who needs no introduction.

This paper provides a relatively accurate account of the shrinking civic space in Central Africa, particularly in Cameroon and the North West and South West regions, which have been experiencing an unprecedented socio-political crisis since 2017. This document should serve as a bedside book for human rights defenders who should go through it, dissect it, understand it and exploit it for the accomplishment of their work.

The relevance of this study goes beyond human rights defenders to interest public authorities who will be able to

use it to better address public policies in terms of respect for human rights in strict compliance with the texts signed by governments at the international level.

It is no secret that human rights defenders are targeted by non-state armed groups and sworn security services (armies and police): assassinations, death threats, verbal threats, arbitrary arrests and detentions, voluntary disconnection of internet connections, surveillance and other incidents are the daily lot of human rights defenders. In some cases, the staff of some of the most virulent NGOs in the field of advocacy and denunciation of human rights violations have been turned over by the public authorities. One could also speak of the creation of complacent NGOs by and for governments in order to parasitize the actions of true human rights defenders. The denigration of NGOs by the authorities and other harmful actions are part of the authorities' desire to tarnish the image and credibility of human rights defenders.

"From the 1998 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders to the Kigali Declaration (2003), the 1998 Grand Bay Declaration and Plan of Action and various United Nations resolutions on the issue,

It remains necessary to establish a permanent, frank and sincere dialogue between all parties. It is about public authorities, civil society, intellectuals and others; so that

the walls of suspicion, mistrust and intolerance collapse and that the ideals of democracy, of which freedom is an important pillar, are not just mere incantations.



ACRONYMES ET ABREVIATIONS

ACHPR	: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
CEDAW	: Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
HRD	: Human Rights Defenders
VHRD	: Vulnerable Human Rights Defenders
UDHR	: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WHRDs	: Women Human Rights Defenders
LEF	: Law Enforcement Forces
NHRI	: National Human Rights Institution
LGBTI	: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
FGM	: Female Genital Mutilation
NED	: National Endowment for Democracy
OECD	: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
UN	: United Nations
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
ICCPR	: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
REDHAC	: Human Rights Defenders Network in Central Africa
AU	: African Union

I. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

A. Context

In many countries, advocating for the respect and defense of human rights is a very high-risk activity. It is all the more so because fundamental rights are often in conflict with the political, economic, social and cultural model in place. In these countries, women, girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) sexual minorities and all others working on gender issues are exposed to major risks. They are part of the so-called Vulnerable Human Rights Defenders (VHRDs)¹.

Like all Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and VHRDs contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels, in particular by collecting and disseminating related information, denouncing human rights violations committed by state actors as well as abuses perpetrated by other actors

¹ The DDHV are associated with the FDDH. They are HRDs who work on themes that expose them to higher risks. They are more specifically targeted in this study.

The WHRDs are actors in the protection of human rights in the international system as well as in the regional and national systems. Through their actions, they challenge social prejudices and fight against the impunity of the State and non-state actors. They are active in states experiencing armed conflicts, in stable countries, in countries with a democratic deficit, as well as in so-called democratic countries.

The work of HRDs is essential in inclusive, safe and prosperous societies. Like other HRDs, WHRDs are very often subject to violations and other human rights abuses.²

This repression of which they are victims takes the form of surveillance, threats and intimidation, including against their close relatives and offspring, defamation campaigns orchestrated by the media, bans on leaving or returning to the country, harassment in the workplace, arbitrary questioning, arrests and detentions, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, which can result in the death of the victim.

FDDHs working in the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon are not immune to these risks.

2 As recognized in ACHPR Resolution 409 (LXII) 2018, FDDHs are a group of HRDs at risk, due to their gender and work "they lead in favor of women's rights, including the right to health, sexual reproductive rights, as well as the many gender-based violations.

However, the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these violations is particularly disturbing.

B. Justification

In a 2014 report on the situation of WHRDs in Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) documents for the first time the multiple violations suffered by these women.

This report recommends, among other things, that civil society popularize the report and initiate programs to implement its recommendations.

In line with its mission of promoting and defending HRDs in Central Africa, and in application of these recommendations, REDHAC has developed specific manuals for WHRDs, some of which have been translated into the local language, Pidgin English^{3*}. It has also organized workshops and other meetings thanks to the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Canadian Government, the French Embassy in Cameroon and the British High Commission in Cameroon.

^{3*} *Pidgin English is a variation of the English language used by population in Cameroon. Still called bush English, it is the creole English of the local populations in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.*

In this vein, REDHAC received financial support from the British High Commission in Cameroon to conduct a "Study on the situation of HRDs in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, in particular girls and women defenders, journalists, internally displaced persons and LGBTIQ defenders"

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

A. General objectives

Since 2016, the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon, the North-West (with the city of Bamenda as its capital) and the South-West (with the city of Buea as its capital), have been in the grip of a bloody social and security crisis that pits the separatists of these regions against the government of the Republic.

The WHRDs and other VHRDs, often considered by the parties to the conflict as spies and trackers, are paying a heavy price in this crisis³.

In this context of security and social crisis, the Study on the situation of HRDs in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, in particular girls and women defenders, journalists, internally displaced persons and LGBTIQ defenders, aims to identify the legal and social

³ We recall the case of Mr. Franklin MOHWA, REDHAC's focal point in the South-West who went to a national gendarmerie entity on 06 August 2018 to request information, never returned.

obstacles that prevent WHRDs and LGBTIQ defenders in these two regions from enjoying their rights as defenders in order to consider recommendations for State and non-State actors to improve their living and working conditions.

B. Specific objectives

Specifically, the study aims to :

- Enable REDHAC and state and non-state actors to gain insight into the situation of the many Women Human Rights Defenders and other WHRDs in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon
- Encourage REDHAC and state and non-state actors to consider actions to popularize the 2014 ACHPR Report on the situation of WHRDs in Africa among stakeholders in Central Africa and particularly in Cameroon, more specifically in the two regions of North-West and South-West
- Help REDHAC to better adapt the implementation programs of the 2014 ACHPR recommendations on the situation of WHRDs in Africa to the specific local and national realities of WHRDs and VHRDs.

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF WHRDS AND OTHER VULNERABLE HRDS

A. Definitions of Concepts

1. The Human Rights Defender "HRD

The UN Declaration on HRD gives a broad definition of what a HRD is. It includes not only those who defend human rights as specialized professionals, but also members of other professions, such as journalists and lawyers, not to mention volunteers and all those who are involved in human rights activities, even if only occasionally.

2. The woman Human Rights Defender «WHRD»

The former Special Rapporteur on HRDs in Africa, Reine ALAPINI GANSOU defined WHRDs as "all women engaged, individually or in association with others, in the promotion and protection of human rights and all those working for women's rights and rights related to gender and sexuality, regardless of their sexual orientation.

B. Territoriality, targets and sampling

1. Territoriality of the study

Although the study focuses on the two regions of North-West and South-West Cameroon, the particularity of the threats and risks observed in the countries of the subregion as a whole reflect the trend observed to varying degrees in the Central African subregion.

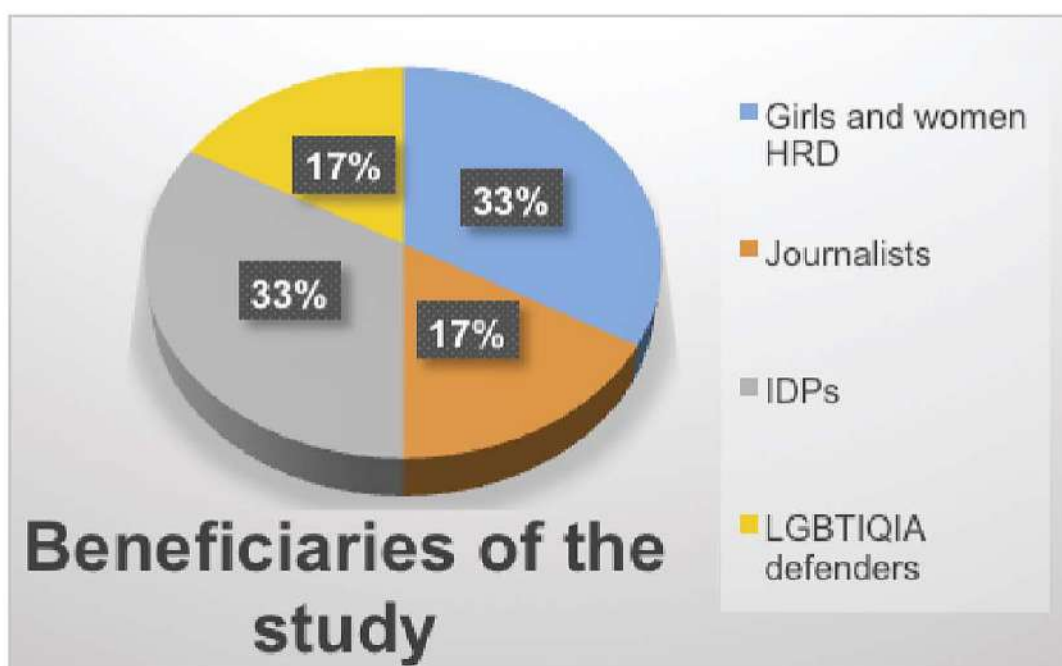
The recommendations and advocacy strategies resulting from this work are therefore valid for all the countries covered by REDHAC's activities, namely: Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad.

2. Targets of the study

These are the beneficiaries and other direct stakeholders.

a. The beneficiaries

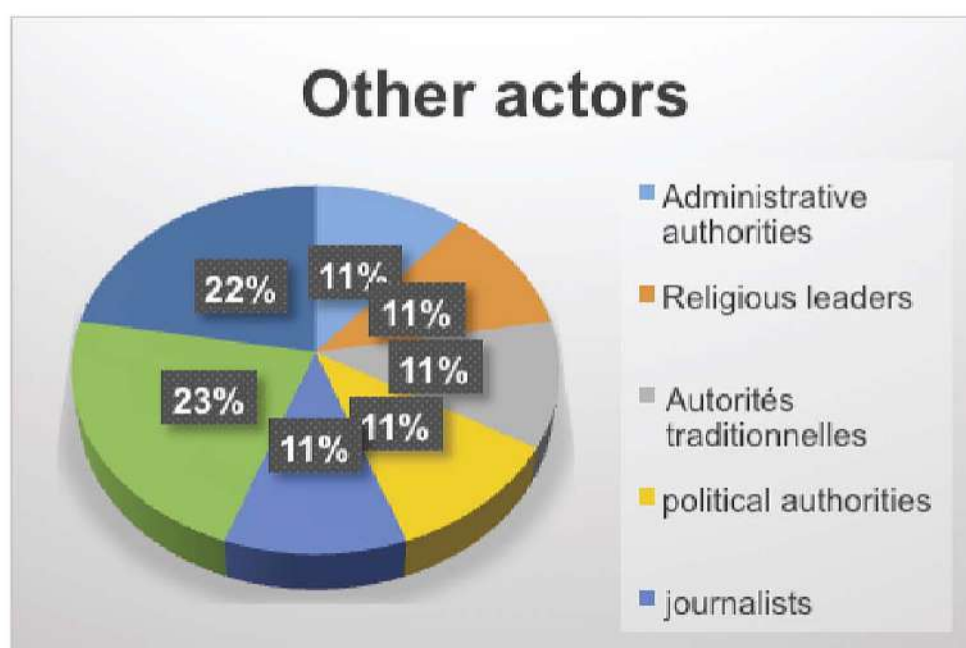
- Girls and women defenders
- Journalists
- Internally displaced persons
- LGBTIQ defenders..



Graph 1 representing the beneficiaries of the study

b. Other direct stakeholders

- Administrative authorities
- The religious authorities
- Traditional authorities
- Political authorities
- The men of the media
- FMO personnel (Police, Gendarmerie, Army...)
- Others (the civilian population, victims of the crisis...).



Graph 2 representing the other interviewees

3. Sampling

Simple random sampling, which has the merit of offering each individual the same probability of being part of the overall sample, was used. In order to balance and represent the population to be studied for the two regions, 60 people (30 for the North-West and 30 for the South-West) answered the questionnaire that was submitted to them.

This relatively small sample is justified by time constraints, constraints related to the availability of the actors to be interviewed, and constraints related to the prevailing security context.

Table 1:**Summary of the sample of respondents**

N°	Categories	Total for both regions
Beneficiaries		
1	Girls and women defenders	08
2	Journalists	04
3	Internally displaced persons	08
4	LGBTIQI defenders	04
Subtotal 1		24
Other actors		
1	Administrative authorities	04
2	Religious authorities	04
3	Traditional authorities	04
4	Political authorities	04
5	Men of the media	04
6	Law enforcement staff (Police, Gendarmerie, Army...)	08
7	Others	08
Subtotal 2		36
General total		60

IV. METHODOLOGY

The Study on the Situation of HRDs in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, in particular girls and women defenders, journalists, internally displaced persons and LGBTIQ defenders, randomly targeted the said beneficiaries of the study as well as other direct stakeholders.

It was carried out through a participatory approach involving all the stakeholders mentioned above. The key stages of the work consisted of a preparatory phase, a data collection and analysis phase and a final phase of drafting the study report and its validation. Emphasis was also placed on the difficulties encountered in conducting the study.

A. Preparatory phase

This phase was articulated around :

- The holding of 02 briefing and framing meetings
- Documentary review
- Identification of target groups to be met (sampling)
- Development of data collection tools
- The drafting and validation of the methodological note.

B. Data collection and analysis phase

This section discusses the data collection tool, the parties involved in the data collection, the difficulties encountered, and the analysis of the data.



1. Data collection

a. Data Collection Tool

Two (2) individual and direct interview questionnaires/guides were developed and used for data collection. These data collection tools, one for beneficiaries and the other for other stakeholders, were

developed in the two working languages in Cameroon, English and French. The use of the English version of this tool facilitated work with certain populations in the two regions who speak Pidgin English instead of English and who are numerous among the IDPs, one of the targets of the study.

The questionnaires/interview guides were pre-tested with a group of REDHAC youth interns to ensure that their terms would be understood and that the questions would be interpreted in the same way by all respondents.

b. Parties involved in data collection

For field data collection, the group of people who conducted the study⁴ was based on:

- REDHAC Focal Points in the two regions
- REDHAC peer educators in the two regions
- Some members of the networks of associations and NGOs affiliated with REDHAC.

4 Mrs. Eva Jacqueline ETONGUE MAYER, Human Rights Expert, former Secretary General of the Human Rights Commission of Cameroon, Mr. Jacques DOO BELL, Journalist and human rights activist.

In total, a multidisciplinary team of 10 people was recruited for their expertise in this type of activity. That is to say 5 people for the North-West and 5 for the South-West, each having interviewed an average of 6 people.

c. Time and place of data collection

The data collection for the Study on the situation of HRDs in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, in particular girls and women defenders, journalists, internally displaced persons and LGBTIQ defenders, was carried out in Bamenda and Buea, the capitals of the two target regions. It took place during the month of February 2022.

Data collection, analysis and writing of the study report took place between early and Half-March 2022.

2. Data analysis

It should be noted at the outset that all data was recorded anonymously to ensure confidentiality of respondents.

The analysis of the data, which was supposed to be qualitative for the administrative authorities and certain actors, and quantitative for the HRDs, WHRDs and VHRDs, turned out to be qualitative for both groups of actors (beneficiaries and others), given the fact that it was

not possible to reach a very large number of people given the diversity of the actors targeted (ten "10" categories of actors on average).

C. Validation of the study report and difficulties encountered

I. Validation of the study report

The validation of this study report was intended to be open and participatory. It involved :

- REDHAC staff and interns from the organization
- Five HRDs (men and women)
- Two lawyersDeux journalistes
- A sociologist
- The Executive Director of REDHAC
- Three members of the REDHAC Board of Directors
- The Group of Experts who piloted the study
- The team of translators and proofreaders.

2. Difficulties encountered during data collection

The main difficulties encountered in collecting data for this study include:

- The mistrust and reluctance of some advocates to receive the interview leaders
- Appointments that were not always kept

- The hostility of some FMO agents towards anything related to human rights defenders
- Some respondents did not feel they had to answer all the questions
- Language barriers due to the lack of fluency in Pidgin for some interviewers.

SECTION II

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND OTHER DEFENDERS FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS

I. AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The protection of Human Rights Defenders is based on the general principles of non-discrimination and equal rights as recognized in the Universal Declaration of



Human Rights (UDHR)⁵, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)⁶, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁷ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁸.

These principles are mainly applied in the context of:

- The protection of human rights recognized to every individual and necessary for the work of every HRD, such as freedom of expression, opinion, association and assembly, and the right to participate in public life⁹ including the promotion and protection of human rights

⁵ DUDH, Article 1.

⁶ PIDCP, Article 2, 3 et 26

⁷ PIDESC, Article 3.

⁸ CEDEF, Article 1.

⁹ PIDCP, Article 25 ; CEDEF, Article 7.

- The protection of HRDs as recognized in the 1998 Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (UN Declaration on HRDs)¹⁰ . The UN Declaration on HRDs sets for the first time minimum standards for the protection of HRDs. It also calls on States to support the activities of HRDs and to ensure that their rights are respected by both State and private actors (companies or fundamentalist groups).
- In its article 1, the Declaration states that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels. States have an obligation to protect all HRDs and to ensure safe conditions and an enabling environment for their work.

Although it is not binding, the UN Declaration on HRDs has an undeniable moral dimension:

- It constitutes a unique universal tool, which calls on States to recognize the vital role of HRDs in the promotion and protection of human rights, democratization and the construction of peaceful and just societies

¹⁰ General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/144 adopted on December 9, 1998.

- It also constitutes a recognition of their need for protection
- Without it, it would not have been possible for the UN Commission on Human Rights to create in 2000 the mandate of Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights Defenders, which has since been transformed into the mandate of the Special Rapporteur
- The UN Declaration on HRDs led to the creation by the ACHPR in 2004 of a Special Rapporteur on HRDs in Africa.
- At the American level, it led to the creation in 2011 of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights;
- Some countries and regional organizations have been inspired by this Declaration to adopt the following guidelines¹¹ to take into account the protection of HRDs in their foreign policies;
- Other countries on the African continent have been inspired by this Declaration to adopt national laws for the protection of HRDs¹².

¹¹ See the *Swiss Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* and the *Canadian Guidelines for Human Rights Support*.

¹² *Ivory Coast in 2014, Burkina Faso and Mali in 2017.*

II. At the African regional level

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 27 June 1981 is the main instrument for the protection of human rights on the continent. This text includes in its corpus and protects all the rights and freedoms



necessary for the action of HRDs, enshrined in the universal texts of international human rights law. The principle of equal rights, recognized in Article 2 of the African Charter, reinforced by the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa¹³ constitutes the basic legal protection of WHRDs in Africa. Other declarations and sub-regional initiatives complement it.

The African Charter also provides for the establishment of the ACHPR. The ACHPR is the principal organ of the African human rights system on the continent.

According to Article 30 of the African Charter, "the Commission shall be responsible for the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in Africa.

On this basis, the ACHPR's functions include examining reports from member states as well as individual communications, making observations, addressing recommendations to the parties and giving opinions on

¹³ Maputo Protocol (2003).

cases of human rights violations that are submitted to it.

Although it has no coercive powers, it can encourage member states to improve the promotion and protection of human rights through the public nature of its recommendations, investigation reports and periodic evaluations.

Despite the difficulties encountered in the implementation of its findings, recommendations and opinions, the ACHPR plays an important role in the protection of human rights. By making public the human rights violations perpetrated by African states, it makes it possible to measure the effectiveness of these rights. Above all, it allows other actors to react in order to put an end to violations of which they are victims or of which they are aware more quickly. In recent years, it has been supported in its mission by the African Court of Justice. Their work and collaboration are aimed at making the African human rights system more effective.

The ACHPR has adopted several resolutions and recommendations in which it has taken note of the threats and assaults on HRDs in Africa. Most notable is ACHPR Resolution 409 (LVII) 2018 on the need to adopt legal measures for the protection of HRDs in Africa. It also emphasized the need for states to take measures to protect these women and promote their work.

The study discussed in this report focuses, among other things, on the follow-up to Resolution 409, which specifically calls on States to :

- Recognize the importance of the role of HRDs
- Take into consideration the seriousness of the violations perpetrated against HRDs
- Adopt specific legal measures to ensure their protection
- Put an end to acts of intimidation or reprisals against WHRDs because of their collaboration with national, regional and international human rights bodies and prosecute their perpetrators
- Protect those involved in the fight against violence against WHRDs.

III. IN CENTRAL AFRICA

None of the eight (8) Central African countries covered by REDHAC's activities has, to date, adopted national legislation on the specific promotion and protection of human rights.



Since 2017, REDHAC has developed the Central African model law on the "promotion and protection of Human Rights Defenders for an adoption process. This process was inspired by the 1998 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the model law on the recognition and protection of human rights defenders developed by the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR).¹⁴

This process was materialized by :

¹⁴ https://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/documents/model_law_french_january2017_screenversion.pdf

A. The case of the CAR

For the CAR, REDHAC and its Country Coalition, in collaboration with state and non-state human rights actors, contextualized the law on the "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the CAR. Thanks to advocacy in the field, this draft bill was submitted to the President of the Law Commission of the National Assembly of the CAR.

B. The case of the DRC

For the DRC, work is being done to contextualize the draft model law. Advocacy actions are being implemented for its eventual adoption.

C. The case of Cameroon

For Cameroon, Senator Pierre Flambeau NGAYAP has, in 2021, submitted to the Senate a bill on the promotion and protection of Human Rights Defenders in Cameroon.

IV. LAWS HINDERING THE WORK OF HRDS AND OTHER HRDS: ANTI-TERRORIST LAWS AND OTHER TEXTS IN SOME COUNTRIES

The legal culture and a number of laws hinder the work of the WHRDs. This is the case of all the laws hindering the rights of women and LGBTQ people.

Like any individual, the WHRDs must benefit from the exercise of the rights recognized by the African Charter, subject only to the necessary restrictions enacted by the laws and regulations, in particular in relation to the interest of national security, national safety, the safety of others, public order, health or public morality as well as the rights and freedoms of individuals.

Since the global fight against terrorism, the suspicion towards HRDs has increased. With the increase in terrorist acts in the subregion, many governments have adopted anti-terrorism laws. In other cases, they have revised their legislation, thereby restricting fundamental freedoms. The threat of terrorism can thus be used to hinder the work of the WHRDs and other VHRDs.

The risks of amalgamation are real and it is recommended to be vigilant so that people who, in the name of freedom of expression, raise their voice in defense of human rights, are not considered as enemies of the State or accused of undermining national security. In addition, the development of surveillance techniques, especially of HRDs through social networks and cell phones, continues

to progress throughout the sub-region and particularly in conflict areas such as the North West and South West of Cameroon.

Surveillance laws and practices have a detrimental and widespread effect on the population. They cause human rights defenders to censor themselves in the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly for fear of reprisals.

This effect is further exacerbated by the threats of legal action that arise from such practices and which divert the energy and resources of HRDs, who are preoccupied with the legal proceedings against them. If we take CAMEROON as an example: we can cite :

- Law No. 2014-28 of December 23, 2014 on the repression of acts of terrorism;
- Section 83 (1) of Law No. 2010/01 of 21 December 2010 on cyber security and cybercrime in Cameroon, which states that: "Any person who, by means of electronic communications, makes sexual proposals to a person of his or her sex shall be punished by imprisonment of one (01) to two (02) years and a fine of 500,000 (five hundred thousand) to 1,000,000 (one million) CFA francs, or by one of these two penalties only" ;

- Article 83(2) of the same text provides that: "The penalties provided for in paragraph 1 above are doubled when the proposals have been followed by sexual intercourse;
- Section 347(1) of Law No. 2016/007 of July 12, 2016 to establish the Penal Code in Cameroon entitled Homosexuality, provides that:
- « Is punished by an imprisonment of six (06) months to five (05) years and a fine of 20,000 (twenty thousand) to 200,000 (two hundred thousand) francs, any person who has sexual relations with a person of his sex



Training on the Simplified Physical, Data Security and Online Protection Manual in local language (Pidgin) in Limbe, South West Region, Cameroon

Based on the attached questionnaires which document, among other things

- The types of violations and challenges faced by WHRDs and other VHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon
- The normative framework and political, socio-cultural and religious practices and behaviors in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon
- The implementation of country recommendations on the situation of the WHRDs...

The two (2) tables below summarize the main results obtained after the analysis of the data collected. They are followed by the main conclusions that emerge from them.

Table 2:

Summary of study beneficiaries' responses

N°	Starting questions	Answers
01	How long have you been involved in human rights advocacy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 years for 02 beneficiaries • 16 years for 04 beneficiaries • 07 years for 08 beneficiaries • 02 years for 06 beneficiaries • None for the other 04

N°	Starting questions	Answers
02	Why are you involved in the defense of human rights?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 beneficiaries believe that the defense of HR is a cardinal value • 10 beneficiaries believe they are contributing to the respect of human dignity • 04 beneficiaries believe that it is their role • 04 beneficiaries believe that the security situation on the ground could not help but challenge them • 01 WHRDs believes that some women defenders have inspired them by their courage and commitment.
03	What do you do on a daily basis? How and with whom?	Field visits, listening, advice, advocacy, lobbying, sensitization, training, denunciation, psychological, financial and material support, case follow-up, reports...
04	What are the difficulties you are facing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty being recognized as an advocate in their community • Social rejection • The WHRDs are taken to task by the parties involved in the crisis • WHRDs have difficulty obtaining funding for their activities • WHRDs describe the lack of security and protection mechanisms in their work.
05	What are the main violations of the rights of WHRDs in the Region?	Threats, intimidation, rape, physical and moral harm, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, insults, contempt, defamation, murder, violence against relatives...

N°	Starting questions	Answers
06	Who are the main respondents?	The community, the family, the various authorities, the insurgents and the FMO...
07	Are sexual minority WHRDs at greater risk? Why?	Yes. They stand up for causes that society rejects. They are more careful with themselves and avoid certain environments.
08	Do you know of other themes that expose the most WHRDs in the region?	Land issues, security, fair trial, corruption, influence peddling, combating cultural abuses such as female genital mutilation (FGM), and advocacy
09	Are you aware of the existence and content of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRDs in Africa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06 women said they had heard about the report • 04 women said they had read the report • 10 women have never heard of it.
10	Do you know the texts that protect HRDs at the UN, AU and Cameroon levels? Quote them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several interviewees had heard of the UN Declaration on HRDs • None of them were able to invoke another specific text for the protection of HRH • Some referred to CEDAW, the UDHR and other relevant human rights instruments • A few did not answer this question.
11	Do you know the mechanisms that protect HRDs at the UN, AU and Cameroon levels? Name them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several interviewees mentioned the ACHPR • Some mentioned NHRIs and civil society • Others did not provide an answer to the question.

N°	Starting questions	Answers
12	What are the obstacles and challenges for a better protection of the rights of WHRD in the Region?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety hazards • Bad roads • Cultural and religious problems • Social communication problems (working language and means of communication) • Insufficient training of the WHRDs • The non-existence of a mechanism for the protection of HRDs supervised by the law enforcement staff • The lack of means for the implementation of projects.
13	What is the difference between the situation of defenders in the Region before and after the crisis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of the WHRDs affirm that before the crisis, the WHRDs in the 02 Regions worked a little more easily • 100% of the WHRDs say that since the beginning of the crisis, their work has become much more difficult.
14	As a woman defender, do you think you have any particular concerns compared to your male colleagues?	Compared to their male colleagues, 100% of WHRDs claim to be the target of all kinds of threats.
15	What do you propose to improve the situation of the WHRDs in the 02 Regions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the legal framework for the protection of HRDs • Ensure frequent capacity building of WHRDs • Engage the State to take positive measures to ensure their protection.
16	How do you see the future for WHRDs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are confident although there are reasons to be concerned • We do not let our guard down in the face of our struggle • The fight is hard, but it must be fought.

Table 2:**Summary of responses from other stakeholders**

N°	Starting questions	Answers
01	Do you know any WHRDs in the region?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 peoples are aware of WHRDs• 10 peoples do not know of any WHRDs• 08 no answer
02	Who are they? What is your relationship with them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 actors know them through their field activities• 12 actors have no particular relationship with them• 14 no answer
03	How do you rate their work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For 10 actors, they are worthy of respect• For 07 actors, they pursue their own interests first• 19 actors are clear.
04	What do you say about their situation in the context of the current crisis in the 02 Regions of the North-West and South-West?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are very exposed (11 cases)• They deserve the full attention of the public authorities for their contributions to social peace (7 cases)• RAS for 18 actors.
05	What future for the FDDH in the 02 Regions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We encourage them to master their work and to persevere (8 cases)• They should not come and teach us our work (09 cases)• I don't know what they do on the field (5 cases).• Everyone wants to be a defender of human rights (6 cases)• RAS for 8 cases.

I- SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS, REPRISALS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY WHRDS, VHRDS AND OTHER HRDS

The ACHPR study on WHRDs highlights and details across the continent the challenges related to patriarchy, heteronormativity, militarization of countries, religious extremism, globalization¹⁵ . All these hazards constitute obstacles to the promotion and protection of WHRDs.

The present study, conducted in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, makes it possible to contextualize these challenges by highlighting those encountered by the WHRDs and the VHRDs.

Terrorism and the socio-political crises that have been raging for several years in Central Africa, particularly in Cameroon and in the North-West and South-West regions, have been added to this already long list of challenges such as restrictive laws, cultural constraints, harmful traditional practices and threats to the WHRDs and the VHRDs. Terrorism and socio-political crises are real obstacles to the

¹⁵ See ACHPR, *Report*, para 83 and developments, pp 41-45.

work of the WHRDs and the VHRDs. In addition, these two scourges threaten the existence of the communities in which these defenders live and work.

As stated in the ACHPR Report on HRDs:

- WHRDs are subject to specific forms of violence, including sexual violence, such as rape and the threat of rape
- The cumulative results of this research reveal that WHRDs and other VHRDs face various other violations due to the sensitivity of the issues they work on
- Several WHRDs or VHRDs interviewed stated that they had already been a victim or knew of someone who had been a victim of violation due to their work as HRDs
- Intimidation and discrimination are the main types of violations suffered by WHRDs and VHRDs. Discrimination is more noticeable on the side of WHRDs
- Furthermore, one of the most effective ways of attacking WHRDs is to damage their "honour" or reputation
- The humiliations to which WHRDs are subjected lead to their stigmatization and isolation.

In addition to these violations, the research participants also noted that HRDs, WHRDs and VHRDs face harassment, violation of their privacy and death threats.

Furthermore, depending on the country, repression against WHRDs and VHRDs takes the form of surveillance, including of their family members, defamation campaigns orchestrated through the media, bans on leaving or returning to the country, harassment in the workplace, and even murder and assassination.

All too often, the premises of civil society organizations (CSOs) are targeted by attacks, during which files are stolen and computer equipment destroyed, depriving the WHRDs of their working materials.

II. THE PERSISTENCE OF IMPUNITY FOR ALLEGED PERPETRATORS OF VIOLATIONS

The impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of violations suffered by the WHRDs and the VHRDs is particularly worrying.

These risks are heightened in situations of internal conflict or crisis, in countries where the judiciary lacks the necessary independence to sanction perpetrators of violations, and where the judiciary is instrumental in obstructing the activities of human rights defenders.

The fact that violations go unpunished increases the risks faced by WHRDs, VHRDs and other HRDs. Very often also, no follow-up is given to the few complaints filed with the security forces regarding violations against WHRDs. Impunity is one of the main reasons why HRDs and WHRDs continue to be threatened and attacked.

III. DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING JUSTICE

WHRDs and VHRDs have limited access to justice due to the lack of financial means. Indeed, fees are necessary to be defended against the violations they face, against the judicial harassment they suffer and against the criminal case they are very often subjected to.

IV- THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

As for the legal obstacles to the protection of WHRDs, the study shows that

- The implementation of international, regional and national obligations in the field of human rights and related disciplines is at the discretion of the State. The State does so according to its priorities and means
- The WHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions are very exposed in view of the security situation which spares no one
- The responses of WHRDs interviewees show that a large proportion of them are not familiar with the regional and international texts that organize their specific protection. Moreover, those who are aware of the texts do not have a clear knowledge of the mechanisms to be used in case of need
- The majority of actors think that WHRDs should be encouraged for their commitment and courage

- There is a legal vacuum or insufficiency in domestic law for the protection of HRDs, including WHRDs
- There is no clear legal status for HRDs, including WHRDs, in Cameroonian domestic law
- Internal laws hindering the work of WHRDs and other vulnerable HRDs
- Authoritarian drifts under the aegis of the fight against terrorism contribute to the endangerment of the rights of WHRDs and other HRDs.



V. CHALLENGES FACED BY WHRDS, VHRDS AND OTHER HRD

The ACHPR study on HRD highlights and details across the continent the challenges related to patriarchy, heteronormativity, militarization of countries, religious extremism, globalization. All these hazards constitute obstacles to the promotion and protection of HRD.

The present study, conducted in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, makes it possible to contextualize these challenges by highlighting those encountered by the WHRDs and the VHRDs.

Religious extremism and terrorism, which have been rampant in Central Africa for a few years now, add to the already long list of challenges such as restrictive laws, cultural constraints, harmful traditional practices and threats faced by the WHRDs and the VHRDs. Terrorism and religious extremism are barriers to the work of WHRDs and VHRDs. In addition, these two scourges threaten the existence of the communities in which these defenders live and work.

VI- DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING FUNDING

WHRDs, especially those working in local communities, encounter difficulties in accessing funding due to the

difficult formalities to complete and the complicated funding process that requires adequate expertise, as well as the diversity of models that vary depending on the funding partner.

In addition, the global economic crisis has led to a scarcity of resources. This state of affairs has led to a reduction in funding for actions in favour of the realization of human rights in general and women's rights in particular.

In a study by a subsidiary body of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), it was found that in 2014, only 0.5% (US\$192 million) of aid for gender equality went to women's rights organizations in the North and South, compared to 1.2% in 2011. Ninety-two percent of gender equality policy funds went to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or to NGOs in the donor country, compared to only 8% to NGOs in developing countries.

This situation impacts not only on the capacity of WHRDs and VHRDs to do their work to promote human rights but also on their own protection.

VII- WEAK COLLABORATION BETWEEN HRD NETWORKS

Despite the existence in the Central African sub-region of a few networks for the protection of women's rights and WHRDs, collaboration and exchange of experiences between these networks is still weak. This is partly due to language barriers and the weakness of the digital environment and means of communication in the different countries. In addition to the multitude of local languages spoken in the sub-region, it must be recognized that three (03) official languages were inherited from colonization, namely French, English and Portuguese. Depending on the language spoken, the tendency is to limit membership to networks whose predominant language is also our own. Thus, exchanges of experience on protection issues between NGOs and English, French and Portuguese speaking national networks are very little developed.

In addition to this linguistic barrier, we must add the limited financial and human resources available to the Central African networks, compared to those of other sub-regions, notably the Southern, Eastern, Northern and Western sub-regions.

VIII- THE COMMUNITY'S REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE WOMEN AS HRDS AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION

The WHRDs work on socially, politically and economically sensitive issues. They address, but are not limited to, women's rights, inequalities against women, polygamy, hereditary rights, female genital mutilation, sexuality of young women and their right to sexual education including sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, legal age of marriage, and equitable sharing of resources and wealth, especially from extractive industries...

In this, they are seen as "social deviants". They challenge existing social, cultural or religious norms, which are based on stereotypes. This perception of their work means that other HRDs are not always willing to interact with them, let alone support them.

The contribution of WHRDs is also often made invisible and marginalized, even within their own organizations. "Religion and customs are usually used as a pretext to justify abuses against WHRDs. In practice, WHRDs are often confined to the role of mother, daughter and caregiver instead of being seen as legitimate socio-political and economic actors in all sectors of society.

In conservative societies, in particular, WHRDs are mocked for their attempts to bring about change. This situation is very often the result of communities' lack of understanding of the role of HRDs.



Training on the Physical, Data Security and Online Protection Manual specific to girls and women defenders in the North West and South West Regions, simplified in the local language (Pidgin) in Bamenda, North West Region.

It should be stated at the outset that the study's conclusions focus on what should be retained from the analysis of the results obtained.

In any case, the review of the study's findings addresses the findings with regard to the beneficiaries of the study (I), the other actors (II) and the legal obstacles (III). It also focuses on monitoring the impact of the ACHPR recommendations (IV).

I. WITH REGARD TO THE BENEFICIARIES

With regard to girls and women defenders, journalists, internally displaced persons and LGBTIQ defenders, the following conclusions emerge from the analysis of the data collected

1. Women are certainly involved in the defence of human rights, but the crisis in the two regions does not seem to have generated more enthusiasm for the cause. In fact, in 06 years of social unrest, 4 out of 20 women have committed themselves to the cause
2. The WHRDs are inspired by other model FDDH

3. The WHRDs are involved in the promotion, protection and defence of human rights and the rights of vulnerable groups in particular
4. The WHRDs affirm that the defence of human rights is a noble cause
5. The WHRDs face cultural, social, security, financial and political difficulties....
6. The WHRDs are victims of all forms of human rights violations
7. All the major social categories are involved in the violations of the rights of the WHRDs
8. Sexual minority HRDs are more at risk because they defend causes that are rejected by the community
9. In addition to the defence of sexual minorities, issues of land, security, fair trial, corruption, influence peddling and defence of defenders put WHRDs at greater risk
10. 50% of the interviewed WHRDs are not aware of the existence of the ACHPR report on WHRDs
11. 50% of the interviewed WHRDs do not know the

texts, let alone the mechanisms that protect HRDs in the world, in Africa and in Cameroon

12. The obstacles and challenges for a better protection of the rights of WHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions are of a security, cultural, religious, infrastructural, political and managerial nature. They also note the lack of a human rights culture among HRDs and the weak human rights culture among the population

13. The crisis has accentuated the threats to the work of WHRDs

14. WHRDs are more vulnerable simply because they are women

15. The improvement of the situation of WHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions will require the adoption of a law on the protection of HRDs and the adoption and implementation of effective policies for the protection of HRDs

16. The WHRDs of the 02 Regions remain optimistic, vigilant and aware of the fact that their struggle is a long one.

II. AS FOR THE OTHER ACTORS

With regard to the administrative authorities, religious authorities, traditional authorities, political authorities, law enforcement staff (police, gendarmerie, army, etc.), the media and others (civilian population, victims of the crisis, etc.), the following conclusions emerge from the analysis of the data collected

1. The WHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions are not often known to the general public
2. Some actors know the WHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions through the activities they carry out
3. Since they are not very well known, the assessment of the various actors interviewed remains very mixed as to the effectiveness of their actions
4. The WHRDs in the North-West and South-West regions are very exposed in view of the security situation, which does not spare anyone
5. The majority of the actors think that the WHRDs should be encouraged for their commitment and courage.

III. ON THE LEGAL LEVEL

On the legal level, the study notes the following obstacles to the protection of WHRDs

- International and regional texts on the protection of HRDs that are ignored by the latter
- A legal vacuum or insufficiency in domestic law for the protection of HRDs, including WHRDs;
- The inexistence of a clear legal status for HRDs, including WHRDs, in domestic law
- Internal laws hindering the work of WHRDs and other VHRDs
- Authoritarian drifts under the pretext of the fight against terrorism, undermining the rights of WHRDs and other VHRDs.

IV. CONCERNING THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE ACHPR RECOMMENDATIONS

The ACHPR is not a court of law but a body designed to promote and protect the rights of African citizens. Its precedence at the Court, its efforts in the protection and promotion of human rights, in addition to the more flexible conditions for its referral, make it the keystone of the African regional human rights protection system.

On the issue of the non-implementation of the ACHPR recommendations on WHRDs in their countries, the participants interviewed identified the following causes at the institutional level:

1. The absence of focal points or ministries in charge of the follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms at the level of the States Parties. This makes it difficult to implement the Commission's recommendations
2. The absence of a national plan for the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of the States Parties. This also hinders the implementation of the Commission's recommendations
3. Lack of knowledge by some state actors about:
 - The implementation of the ACHPR's recommendations
 - The non-binding nature of the recommendations and decisions of the ACHPR
 - The evocation of state sovereignty
 - The lack of will of some States Parties which may explain the low importance given to the recommendations and opinions of the ACHPR.

4. The lack of visibility on the actions of the ACHPR and the appropriate channels for disseminating the recommendations and decisions of this mechanism among the populations of member states, which does not favour their appropriation and implementation by citizens and CSOs

5. The weak involvement of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and national CSOs which play a key role in the implementation of the recommendations and opinions of the ACHPR

6. The lack of financial means, especially for small CSOs, is another major obstacle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The consolidation of peace, human security, dignity, social cohesion and sustainable development cannot be achieved without the promotion of justice, freedoms and equality for all human beings, as underlined by the objectives of the UDHR.



In 1998, 50 years after the adoption of the UDHR, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on HRDs. The Declaration recognises the importance of the role of civil society actors in the defence of human rights. Crucially, it affirms the responsibility of States to implement and enforce all the provisions and in particular their duty to protect HRDs from risks arising from their work and to ensure an environment where they can freely exercise their activity and rights.

By creating, in 2004, the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa, the ACHPR affirmed its determination to support the universal system in the international protection of HRDs.

Both at the international level and at the level of the ACHPR, the challenges faced by WHRDs and other VHRDs have been the subject of studies, which have highlighted the need for protection of VHRDs.

The above review of the daily activity of WHRDs in Central Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular, in the North-West and South-West regions, which have been plagued by the socio-political crisis since 2016, shows that the situation and the environment for their work are affected by several negative factors. These include the lack of legal protection, the lack of resources, the low level of awareness of human rights issues among the population, the lack of knowledge of the nature, role and importance of HRDs, the attacks against HRDs and the impunity enjoyed by state and non-state perpetrators.

While all HRDs face these obstacles, they are even greater for WHRDs and other VHRDs. This is due to the patriarchal system, social and religious values and the heteronormativity in place. Thus, WHRDs can be the target of religious extremism or be accused of promoting foreign values. WHRDs are also subject to specific gender-based threats and violence such as rape.

In order to address the above challenges and others that may hinder progress towards the promotion and protection of WHRDs, the following proposals for action emerged from the study:

I. AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- Guarantee the legal protection of HRDs, WHRDs and VHRDs by adopting the law on the "promotion and protection of Human Rights Defenders", specifically, in accordance with international standards
- Establish a complaint system adapted to WHRDs in order to stop impunity for violations committed against them
- Strengthen national legislation on access to and use of the Internet in accordance with international standards
- Strengthen human rights education programmes on the role of HRDs including WHRDs
- Disseminate and popularize the provisions of the UN Declaration on HRDs to communities and the general public
- Involve the media, traditional communication networks, playwrights and all other communication channels in the dissemination of information on HRDs
- Encourage HRDs, VHRDs and WHRDs in particular, to position themselves in the logic of a permanent quest for knowledge
- Develop and implement programmes for the promotion and protection of human rights in general and the rights

of HRDs and WHRDs in particular, targeting governmental, judicial, religious, traditional, health and FMO authorities

- Create a framework for dialogue and consultation between law enforcement officials and staff and members of NHRIs and human rights CSOs in order to introduce into national legislation the provisions of the UN Declaration on HRDs that take into account the challenges of HRDs, in particular WHRDs
- Organise and implement capacity building programmes for national coalitions and platforms concerned with the promotion, protection and defence of HRDs' rights and the challenges faced by vulnerable HRDs, in particular WHRDs
- Encourage NHRIs to set up a permanent dialogue framework with human rights CSOs
- Redouble efforts to strengthen solidarity between the different groups that make up certain movements and/or networks and bring them closer to other movements (networking). Networking is indeed a guarantee for the security and protection of HRDs in general and HRDF and VHRDs in particular
- Encourage the government to put in place effective mechanisms for psychological, mental health and financial reparation of WHRDS and VHRDS

- Create a formal consultation framework for the effective protection of WHRDS and VHRDS in the NOSO regions.

II. AT THE AFRICAN SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL

- To recommend the Cameroonian government to pay attention to the situation of the WHRDS and other VHRDS in particular those working in the North-West and South-West
- Develop and implement capacity building programmes for coalitions and regional platforms concerned with the promotion, protection and defence of HRD rights
- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices between coalitions and regional platforms concerned with the promotion, protection and defence of HRD rights through study tours and exchange workshops
- Conduct advocacy campaigns for the domestication of the UN Declaration on HRDs and the improvement of the working environment of HRDs, VHRDs and WHRDS in particular. These campaigns aim, among other things, at reducing the risks and challenges they face in the exercise of their function
- Organise exchange meetings on international, regional and national human rights protection mechanisms with a focus on the procedure for referring cases to these mechanisms

- Work for a multifaceted support of international organisations and diplomatic representations to the actions of HRDs, VHRDs and WHRDs in particular.

III. AT ALL LEVELS

- Encourage technical and financial partners to redouble their efforts by reinforcing financial and technical support to organisations at local, national and sub-regional levels.

POSTFACE



Me Reine ALAPINI GANSOU,

Lawyer at the Benin Bar

Former Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Defenders in Africa; Former President of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

I read with great attention the REDHAC study entitled
« For an inclusive protection of Human Rights Defenders, women, youth, exiles and internally displaced persons»: OUR MOTTO!

REDHAC has undertaken its activities in all areas of human rights throughout the Central African region.

Indeed, the Central African Region remains a region of all challenges; what shall I say? A region rich in cultural relics with its pleasant and warm environment. It is also where many violations of human rights, the rights of human rights defenders including those of Women Defenders and Vulnerable Human Rights Defenders occur.

What I found was a holistic and rigorous study that did not have the weakness of bias or flippancy, as the facts presented were supported by good evidence. The report incorporated the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other subsequent United Nations texts as a

working tool. I can also safely conclude that this study is very representative of the countries covered by REDHAC both geographically and historically, more specifically in the North West and South West regions, and reveals to the reader the disastrous and shocking reality of the serious human rights violations that suffocate the daily life of the population in the Central African region, This situation is aggravated by the scourge of violent terrorism, which is taking root in African countries in defiance of the right to life and all the sacrosanct rights provided for in many legal instruments both at the universal and African regional levels. This scourge undermines all the dissuasion policies, concerted or otherwise, undertaken by the government authorities of the countries concerned, particularly Cameroon.

One of the specificities of this study lies in the offer of a response to each type of violation of the rights of WHRDs and other VHRDs identified. This is already a door to constructive dialogue with stakeholders, in this case the political actors of the countries included in this report, whose quality in both form and substance is beyond doubt.

The COVID 19 pandemic is certainly not making the work of human rights defenders any easier in an already hardened context. Only the strength of will and perseverance; the love of patronage could lead the Human

Rights Defenders of Central Africa to satisfactory results and a better understanding of their mission.

The drafting of this study alone demonstrates that Central African Human Rights Defenders in general, and Women Human Rights Defenders in particular, are well prepared to go the extra mile.

I wish we had entitled this study **"HUMAN RIGHTS and PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN CENTRAL AFRICA: RUMBLING WIND UNDER COVID-19"**

Good luck to all!

ANNEXES

RESEARCH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDS) AND OTHER VULNERABLE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (VHRDS) IN CENTRAL AFRICA

FACT SHEET HRD AND WHRD

The survey is part of the project entitled The Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders implemented by REDHAC and the High Commission of Great Britain in Cameroon. It aims to contribute to the improvement of the working environment of defenders in Cameroon in general, in particular those working in the North-West and South-West regions and to enable REDHAC, the beneficiary organizations and member focal points to carry out activities adapted to the realities and specificities of WHRDS and other VHRDS in the NOSO regions. To that end, we would be grateful if you would give this inquiry a few minutes. This collection is anonymous, so it is not necessary to mention your name.

City..... Date.....

Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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Identification of the respondent

Q101	What's your gender?	M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>	
Q102	How old are you? [18 to 29 years of age] <input type="checkbox"/> [18 to 39 years of age] <input type="checkbox"/> [18 to 49 years of age] <input type="checkbox"/> [49 years and over] <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q103	What is your marital status?	Single <input type="checkbox"/> Bride <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Unanswered <input type="checkbox"/>	
Q104	What position do you hold in your organization?		
Q105	Name of your organization Field of activity		
Q201	What violations do you think HRDs in Central Africa face in general?		
Q202	In your country, are WHRD and HRDs working on the issue of minorities including sexual minorities more at risk?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If not go to Q204

Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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Identification of the respondent

Q203	If yes, explain		
Q204	What are the specific challenges faced by and VHRD in Central Africa?		
Q205	Indicate how you think these violations are specifically gender-based or gender-based (for example, being a woman, or working on reproductive rights and abortion)		
Q206	What are the other issues that women are campaigning on today and that are the source of the risks they face ? (Question of land...)		
Q207	How do you understand the characteristics of WHRD activism in your country ?		

Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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**Strengths and weaknesses in the implementation
of the ACHPR Report recommendations**

Q301	Do you have any knowledge of the content of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRD in Africa?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>	If not go to Q401
Q302	What do you see as the strengths of the implementation of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRD in Africa?		
Q303	What do you see as areas for improvement in the implementation of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRD in Africa?		

**Normative, institutional and legal
framework and political practices and behavior
in Cameroon and in particular in the NOSO regions**

Q401	What are your views on the normative, institutional and legal framework in Cameroon?		
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Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
Q402	In practice, how do you characterize political, sociocultural and religious practices and behavior in Cameroon?	<p>factors <input type="text"/></p> <p>hindering the work of HRDs</p> <p>Factors <input type="text"/></p> <p>promoting the work of HDRs</p>	
Q403	Explain!		

**Obstacles and opportunities in the subregion
to better protect the rights of WHRD**

Q501	What do you see as the obstacles to better protecting the rights of WHRD in the Sub-region?		
Q502	And what opportunities exist in the Sub-region to better protect the rights of WHRD?		

Ongoing legislative process

Q601	What laws are currently being adopted in the CEMAC and ECCAS areas to improve the protection of HRDs?		
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Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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Processus d'adoption des lois en cours

Q602	Do you know in the CEMAC area the institutions responsible for the protection of human rights?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>	If not go to Q701
Q603	If so, which ones?		

National and subregional responses to challenges and strategies

Q701	What short- or long-term actions can be taken at national and regional level to address the various challenges?		
Q702	For each of the proposed actions, what strategies should be adopted?		
Q703	Do you want to clarify a question that was asked earlier or other important things that we may have omitted from this questionnaire?		

Thank you for your cooperation

RESEARCH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDS) AND OTHER VULNERABLE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (VHRDS) IN THE NOSO REGION OF CAMEROON

CSO AND PARTNERS FACT SHEET

The survey is part of the project entitled The Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders implemented by REDHAC and the High Commission of Great Britain in Cameroon. It aims to contribute to the improvement of the working environment of defenders in Cameroon in general, in particular those working in the North-West and South-West regions and to enable REDHAC, the beneficiary organizations and member focal points to carry out activities adapted to the realities and specificities of WHRD and other VHRD in the NOSO regions. To that end, we would be grateful if you would give this inquiry a few minutes. This collection is anonymous, so it is not necessary to mention your name.

City..... Date.....

I. Identification of the respondent:

First and last names :

Gender :

Age group :

II. Specific violations and challenges faced by the Defenders

* The types of violations faced by HRDs in general, and Central Africa in particular. Such violations include those committed by State and non-State actors.

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* The violations faced by women HRDs in Central Africa, focus on the issues of :

- Non-discrimination
- The question of minorities, including sexual minorities
- The Land Issue
- Characteristics of Women's Activism

- Emerging sensitive issues related to women s such as reproductive rights.
- All the issues that women are campaigning on today and that are sources of risk for them.

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Such violations include those committed by State and non-State actors.

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* Violations are specifically gender-based (e.g. being a woman, working on women’s rights oor gender issues).

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* The specific challenges faced by Women Defenders and HRDs in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO regions.

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III. Normative, institutional and legal framework and political practices and behavior in member countries of the subregion

* What are the difficulties that prevent the authorities from acting diligently against such violations in your country (or region)?

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* Are there legal gaps that prevent or hinder the investigation of certain types of human rights violations committed against human rights defenders in Cameroon and in particular in the NOSO regions?

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* Political, sociocultural and religious practices and behavior in the subregion and Cameroon, particularly in the NOSO regions

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* Provision of a mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: does this mechanism provide for concrete actions to ensure coordination with the bodies responsible for investigating human rights violations committed against HRDs, WHRDs and VHRDs in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO areas? Please specify which and how this coordination works.

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* Existence of good practices (legal, administrative, political and other) that adequately address investigations of human rights violations and abuses against human rights defenders? Please describe and specify whether these are state practices or civil society initiatives.

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IV. Obstacles and opportunities in the subregion to better protect the rights of WHRD, particularly in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO regions

* Factual, normative or other obstacles faced by Human Rights Defenders when reporting violations and abuses of their rights

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* Opportunities in the subregion to better protect the rights of WHRD

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V. Ongoing legislative process

* Knowledge of the laws currently being adopted in the CEMAC-ECCAS area for greater protection of HRDs, WHRD and VHRD.

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* Institutions responsible for the protection of human rights in the CEMAC-CEEAC area

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VI. National and subregional responses to challenges and strategies

* Short-term or long-term actions that can be taken at national and regional level to address the various challenges.

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Thank you for your cooperation

RESEARCH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDS) AND OTHER VULNERABLE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (VHRDS) IN CENTRAL AFRICA

FACT SHEET ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES

The survey is part of the project entitled The Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders implemented by REDHAC and the High Commission of Great Britain in Cameroon. It aims to contribute to the improvement of the working environment of defenders in Cameroon in general, in particular those working in the North-West and South-West regions and to enable REDHAC, the beneficiary organizations and member focal points to carry out activities adapted to the realities and specificities of WHRD and other VHRD in the NOSO regions. To that end, we would be grateful if you would give this inquiry a few minutes. This collection is anonymous, so it is not necessary to mention your name.

City..... Date.....

Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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I- Identification of the respondent

Q101	What's your gender?	M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>	
Q102	How old are you? [18 to 29 years of age] <input type="checkbox"/> [18 to 39 years of age] <input type="checkbox"/> [18 to 49 years of age] <input type="checkbox"/> [49 years and over] <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q103	What is your marital status?	Single <input type="checkbox"/> Bride <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Unanswered <input type="checkbox"/>	
Q104	What position do you hold in your organization?		
Q105	Name of your organization Field of activity		

II. Specific violations and challenges faced by human rights defenders

Q201	Are you aware of the types of violations faced by HRDs in general in Central Africa and in particular in Cameroon?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If not go to Q203
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Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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II. Specific violations and challenges faced by human rights defenders

Q202	If so, which ones?		
Q203	What are the specific challenges faced by Women Defenders and VHRDs in Central Africa and in particular in Cameroon and the NOSO regions?		
Q204	In Cameroon in general, and in particular in the NOSO regions, are human rights violations and abuses committed against human rights defenders recorded in a differentiated manner?		
Q205	If so, how is this done?		

Order No.	Questions/ Filter	Terms/ Responses	Jump
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III. Strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the ACHPR Report recommendations

Q301	Do you have any knowledge of the content of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRDs in Africa?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>	If not go to Q401
Q302	What do you see as the strengths of the implementation of the ACHPR report on the situation of WRHDs in Africa?		
Q303	What do you see as areas for improvement in the implementation of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRDs in Africa?		

IV. Normative, institutional and legal framework and political practices and behavior in Cameroon and in particular in the NOSO regions

Q401	What are your views on the normative, institutional and legal framework in Cameroon?		
Q402	Does your country have a mechanism to protect human rights defenders?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>	

Q403	If so, does this mechanism provide for concrete actions to ensure coordination with other bodies responsible for investigating human rights violations against human rights defenders? Please specify which and how this coordination works?		
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**Obstacles and opportunities in
the subregion to better protect the rights of WHRD**

Q501	Are there any obstacles (factual, normative or otherwise) faced by human rights defenders when reporting violations and abuses of their rights in Cameroon?	yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>	If not go to Q503
Q502	If so which?		
Q503	And what opportunities exist in the subregion and in Cameroon in particular to better protect the rights of WHRDs?		

RESEARCH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDS) AND OTHER VULNERABLE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (VHRDS) IN THE NOSO REGION OF CAMEROON

FACT SHEET ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES

The survey is part of the project entitled The Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders implemented by REDHAC and the High Commission of Great Britain in Cameroon. It aims to contribute to the improvement of the working environment of defenders in Cameroon in general, in particular those working in the North-West and South-West regions and to enable REDHAC, the beneficiary organizations and member focal points to carry out activities adapted to the realities and specificities of WHRD and other VHRD in the NOSO regions. To that end, we would be grateful if you would give this inquiry a few minutes. This collection is anonymous, so it is not necessary to mention your name.

City..... Date.....

I. Identification of the respondent:

First and last names:

Gender:

Age group :

II. Specific violations and challenges faced by the Defenders

* The types of violations faced by HRDs in general in Central Africa, particularly in Cameroon, and more specifically in the NOSO regions. Such violations include those committed by State and non-State actors

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* The types of violations faced by HRDs in general in Central Africa. Such violations include those committed by State and non-State actors

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The violations faced by women HRDs in Central Africa, focus on the issues of:

- Non-discrimination
- The question of minorities, including sexual minorities
- The Land Issue
- Characteristics of Women's Activism
- Emerging sensitive issues related to women such as reproductive rights.
- All the issues that women are campaigning on today and that are sources of risk for them.

* Such violations include those committed by State and non-State actors.

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* Violations are specifically gender-based (e.g. being a woman, working on women's rights or gender issues).

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III. The specific challenges faced by Women Defenders and HRDs in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO regions

* What are the difficulties that prevent the authorities from acting diligently against such violations in your country (or region)?

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* Are there legal gaps that prevent or hinder the investigation of certain types of human rights violations committed against human rights defenders in Cameroon and in particular in the NOSO regions?

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* Political, sociocultural and religious practices and behavior in the subregion and Cameroon, particularly in the NOSO regions

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* Provision of a mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: does this mechanism provide for concrete actions to ensure coordination with the bodies responsible for investigating human rights violations committed against HRDs, WHRDs and VHRDs in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO areas? Please specify which and how this coordination works.

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* Existence of good practices (legal, administrative, political and other) that adequately address investigations

of human rights violations and abuses against human rights defenders? Please describe and specify whether these are state practices or civil society initiatives.

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IV. Strength and weaknesses in the implementation of ACHPR reports

* Knowledge of the content of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRD in Africa

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* The implementation of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRD in Africa

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* Areas for improvement in the implementation of the ACHPR report on the situation of WHRD in Africa

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V. Normative, institutional and legal framework and political practices and behavior in the member countries of the subregion, particularly in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO regions

* - What is your assessment of the normative, institutional and legal framework in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO regions?

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* Existence of a mechanism to protect Human Rights Defenders

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VI. Obstacles and opportunities in the subregion, particularly in Cameroon and more specifically in the NOSO regions, to better protect the rights of WHRDS

* Factual, normative or other obstacles faced by Human Rights Defenders when reporting violations and abuses of their rights

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VII. Opportunities in Cameroon, specifically in the NOSO regions to better protect the rights of WHRD

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VIII. Ongoing legislative process

Laws currently being adopted in the ECOWAS area for increased protection of HRDs

IX. National and subregional responses to challenges and strategies

Actions that can be taken at national and regional level to address the various challenges

- * Short term
 - * Long-term
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Thank you for your cooperation

RESEARCH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN DEFENSEURES OF HUMAN RIGHTS (DDH) AND OTHER VULNERABLE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (DHV) IN THE NOSO REGION IN CAMEROON

WHRD AND HRD INTERVIEW GRID

The presence of the investigation is part of the project entitled the situation of women human rights defenders implemented by REDHAC and the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Cameroon. It aims to contribute to the improvement of the working environment of defenders in Cameroon in general, particularly those working in the North-West and South-West regions and to enable REDHAC, recipient organizations and focal points members to carry out activities adapted to the realities and specificities of WHRDS and other VHRDS in NOSO regions. To this end, we will be grateful to you for giving a few minutes to this survey. This collection is anonymous, which is why you do not need to mention your name.

City..... Date.....

I. Identification of the respondent:

First and last names:

Gender:

Age group :

II. The specific violations and challenges faced by Defenders

* The types of violations faced by HDRS in general in Central Africa. These violations include those committed by State and non-State actors

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* The violations faced by WHRD, in Central Africa put a focus on the issues of:

- Non-discrimination
- The question of minorities, including sexual minorities
- The Land Issue
- The Characteristics of Women's Activism
- Emerging sensitive issues related to women such as reproductive rights.

- All issues that women are involved in today and that are a source of risk to them.

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- * These violations include those committed by State and non-State actors.

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- * Violations are specifically based on gender (for example, being a woman, or working on women's rights or gender issues).

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- * The specific challenges faced by women defenders and HDRS in Cameroon and specifically in the NOSO regions

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III. Regulatory, institutional and legal framework, as well as political practices and behavior in the countries members of the subregion

* What difficulties are preventing the authorities from acting diligently in the face of such violations in your country (or region)?

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* Are there legal gaps that prevent or impede investigations into certain types of human rights violations committed against human rights defenders in Cameroon and in particular in the NOSO regions?

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* Political, socio-cultural and religious practices and behavior in the subregion and Cameroon, particularly in the NOSO regionse

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* A mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders: does this mechanism provide for concrete actions to ensure coordination with the bodies responsible for investigating human rights violations committed against HRDS, WHRD, and VHRD, in Cameroon and specifically in NOSO areas? Please specify which and how this coordination works.

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* Are there good practices (legal, administrative, political and other) that adequately address investigations into human rights violations and abuses against human rights defenders? Please describe and clarify whether they are State practices or civil society initiatives.

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IV. Obstacles and opportunities in the subregion to better protect the rights of WHRDS, particularly in Cameroon and specifically in NOSO regions

* The factual, normative and other obstacles faced by human rights defenders when reporting violations and abuses of their rights

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* Existing opportunities in the subregion to better protect the rights of WHRDS

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V. Current Law Adoption Process

* Knowledge of the laws being adopted in the CEMAC-CEEAC space for greater protection of DDH, WHRDS and VHRDS

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VI. The institutions responsible for the protection of human rights in the CEMAC-CEEAC space

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VII. Actions at the national and subregional levels to address challenges and strategies

Short-term or long-term actions that can be carried out at the national and regional levels to meet the various challenges.

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Thank you for your cooperation

THANKS

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