

Obstacles to freedom of the press have greatly decreased, although journalists which pose difficulties for the regime are arrested or tried for libel by the authorities. Revoking the *Administrative Censorship Act* constitutes a moderate step forward, since authorities can still seize copies of a newspaper if it offends public morality. The arrest of the editors of *Le Messenger*, *The Cameroon Post* and *Le Nouvel Indépendant* (which closed since) shows that the old reflex of jailing overly vocal opponents is alive and well. The Government continues to have a monopoly over radio and television. Canada and ACCT [Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency] have developed a project to create five low-watt radio stations. This would represent a major breakthrough in opening up the air waves in Cameroon.

No program or ministry has a mandate to promote and protect minority rights. Since 1972, power has been centralized in Yaoundé at the expense of the English-speaking community, which suffers from marginalization and neglect in terms of development. There is also a problem with the integration of the Pygmy communities of the eastern forest of Cameroon who are virtually absent from the country's political, social and economic life. Fewer than a dozen have completed secondary school. The growing development of their region's forest resources threatens the traditional hunting and gathering rights that they enjoy.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and NGOs, including the *Association camerounaise des femmes juristes* [Cameroonian Association of Women Lawyers] (ACFEJ) work to promote the status of women. Women's rights are guaranteed by the Constitution but not specifically protected in the civil law. Estates, inheritance and divorce are governed by customary law, which varies from region to region, to the disadvantage of women. Spousal abuse is not included in the criminal code. Women are very active economically at the grass-roots level, head of businesses, or occupy high-ranking positions in the Government, the ruling party and the union movement. Outside urban centres, however, their situation has not greatly improved. Cultural pressures continue to make women victims of discrimination. Female genital mutilation is not practised in Cameroon, but there are a few rare exceptions. Contraception is not yet widespread, but there are public campaigns about the ravages of AIDS. Finally, women constitute 46% of primary-school students, 38% of secondary-school students, and only 14% of university students.

There are regulations governing child labour and working conditions, although they are not always applied. The minimum working age (14) is observed in most cases, except for street vendors and rural areas, where children help with domestic and agricultural work. Sexual exploitation of children does not seem to be a problem in Cameroon. However, the practice of early marriage still exists, especially in northern Cameroon. Children are not used in armed conflicts.

Despite its lack of means, the Government seems to be aware of the problem of the disabled, and tries to encourage foreign NGOs to help improve the situation. The media sometimes raise the issue of insufficient prosthetic devices. There is no program providing or promoting employment for the disabled, who are usually forced to depend on charity or their relatives.

CANADIAN POSITION

In 1962, Cameroon became the first sub-Saharan African country with which Canada established diplomatic relations. Our cooperation program in Cameroon originated in 1961.