



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	CAMEROON
Main subject	<u>Treatment of people with HIV/AIDS</u>
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Societal treatment of people with HIV/AIDS in Cameroon</u>2. <u>Societal treatment of single women with HIV/AIDS without male network in Cameroon</u>3. <u>Difference in treatment between the Anglophone and Francophone regions towards people with HIV/AIDS</u>
Date of completion	11 May 2021
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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on 11 May 2021. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE – Cameroon

Treatment of people with HIV/AIDS

1. Societal treatment of people with AIDS/ HIV in Cameroon

HIV/AIDS is considered one of the most serious health issues in Cameroon, while young women are particularly affected by the disease.¹ According to UNAIDS, 510 000 adults and children in Cameroon were living with HIV in 2019, while 310 000 of them were in antiretroviral therapy.²

National legislation criminalising homosexuality pose barriers to HIV prevention, care, and treatment services.³ HIV-positive status in Cameroon, as in other African countries, creates significant social stigma.⁴ Access to HIV/AIDS services is affected by the fear of exposure, and a number of HIV-positive homosexual men tried to hide their sexual orientation by partnering with women. There also have been anecdotal reports of discrimination in places of employment, especially in the private sector, triggered by sexual orientation and HIV status. People with HIV often faced social discrimination and were isolated from their families and society, partly because of lack of knowledge regarding the disease.⁵

Human Rights Watch reported that, on 24 February 2021, the office of Colibri in Bafoussam in West Region, an organisation that provides HIV prevention and treatment services, was raided by police officers, and 13 people including 7 Colibri staff were arrested on homosexuality charges. All of them were released on 26 and 27 February. There were reports that at least three Colibri staff members were beaten during their detention at the police station and that all of the arrested persons received threats and verbal assaults. A 26-year-old transgender woman, who was among the arrested persons, was forced to undergo an HIV test and anal examination at a health centre in Bafoussam on 25 February. The 13 arrested persons were interrogated without the presence of a lawyer and were forced to sign statements without being allowed to read.⁶

The same source referred that, in May 2020, during a gathering hosted by an HIV organisation in a hotel in Bafoussam, 53 people, most of them LGBT, were arrested by police and were charged with offences regarding homosexuality. At least 6 of them, including 3 teenagers ages 15 to 17, were forced to undergo anal examinations and HIV tests. Police officers seized medicine, including antiretrovirals, thermometers, and HIV tests and deprived them some of the HIV treatment the detainees needed.⁷

Furthermore, people with disabilities, including those affected by HIV, who live in rural or hard-to-reach areas and have limited or no access to medical, nutrition and wash facilities are subjected to 'disproportionate suffering'.⁸

¹ Britannica, Cameroon, last updated 10 March 2021, [url](#)

² UNAIDS, Country factsheets, Cameroon 2019, n.d., [url](#)

³ HRW, Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Cameroon, 28 January 2019, [url](#)

⁴ BTI, Cameroon Country Report 2020, 29 April 2020, [url](#)

⁵ USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 30 March 2021, [url](#)

⁶ HRW, Cameroon: Wave of Arrests, Abuse Against LGBT People, 14 April 2021, [url](#); Reuters, LGBT Persecution on the rise in Cameroon, Human Rights Watch says, 14 April 2021, [url](#)

⁷ HRW, Cameroon: Wave of Arrests, Abuse Against LGBT People, 14 April 2021, [url](#); Reuters, LGBT Persecution on the rise in Cameroon, Human Rights Watch says, 14 April 2021, [url](#)

⁸ UNOCHA, Cameroon: Humanitarian Needs overview 2020 revised, 23 June 2020, [url](#), p.20

UNAIDS Country Director for Cameroon referred to people with HIV as a key population in Cameroon, already facing a worrisome stigma.⁹ According to a 2020 report of UNAIDS, there were no references to HIV among the population in Cameroon, while people living with HIV is not recognised as key beneficiaries for social protection. Moreover, even though in Cameroon there are no laws criminalising the transmission of, non-disclosure of or exposure to HIV, there are still prosecutions based on general criminal laws.¹⁰

2. Societal treatment of single women with HIV/AIDS without male network in Cameroon

Among all sources consulted within the time constraints for this COI Query response, no information could be found specifically regarding the societal treatment of single women living with HIV/AIDS without male network in Cameroon. However, the following information could be relevant for the purpose of this COI Query.

HIV/AIDS is one of Cameroon's gravest health concerns' and 'it is particularly widespread among young women'.¹¹ According to UNAIDS, out of the estimated 510 000 adults and children living with HIV in 2019 in Cameroon, an estimated 320 000 were women aged 15 and over.¹² The 2018 Demographic and Health Survey of Cameroon reports that the highest percentage of persons with AIDS/HIV is between widowed women aged 15-49. 'HIV prevalence is particularly high among women who are divorced/separated (8,2%) or widowed (18,4%)'.¹³

A source dated 2014 noted that the 'HIV positive women in Cameroon are the most discriminate against'.¹⁴ According to the UN, the victims of Sexual and Gendered Based Violence in the North-West and South-West regions are at the risk of HIV/AIDS.¹⁵

A document for Cameroon prepared by the GenCap¹⁶ for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provides information on gender equality in Cameroon. According to this document, the 'HIV prevalence among 15-49-year-old is 5% for women and 2,3% for men. Furthermore, the source observed that sexual violence and prostitution (as a survival strategy) leads to the increasing of Sexual Transmitted Diseases and especially to AIDS/HIV.¹⁷ UN Women raised the issues of rape and sexual exploitation of women and girls as a problem for the spread of the HIV/AIDS and Sexual Transmitted Diseases.¹⁸

According to the Plan's International report on Adolescent Girls in North West South West Cameroon on Conflict and COVID-19 'illiteracy, lack of schooling and lack of correct knowledge about safer sex combine to put young women at risk'¹⁹. These challenges leave adolescent girls unprotected against health issues including Sexual Transmitted Diseases and AIDS/HIV.²⁰

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused various problems regarding the treatment of persons with

⁹ UNAIDS, Dealing with COVID-19 in Cameroon, 11 May 2020, [url](#)

¹⁰ UNAIDS, 2020 Global Aids Update, Seizing the moment, 6 July 2020, [url](#), pp. 92, 265

¹¹ Benneh, G. and DeLancey, M., W., Cameroon. 10 March 2021, [url](#)

¹² UNAIDS, Country factsheets, Cameroon 2019, n.d., [url](#)

¹³ NISC and ICF, Cameroon, 2018 Demographic and Health Survey, Summary Report, 2020, [url](#), p.14

¹⁴ IRIN, Enduring HIV stigma in Cameroon, 23 January 2014, [url](#)

¹⁵ UN OCHA, Cameroon: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 3, 31 January 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶ Gender Standby Capacity Project

¹⁷ UN OCHA, Data on Gender Equality in Cameroon, 23 October 2019, [url](#)

¹⁸ UN Women, Cameroon: Gender Profile for the South West Crisis, Buea, May 2019, 31 May 2019, [url](#)

¹⁹ Plan International, Listen to Us, Adolescent Girls in North West South West Cameroon on Conflict and Covid-19, 24 March 2021, [url](#), p.12

²⁰ Plan International, Listen to Us, Adolescent Girls in North West South West Cameroon on Conflict and Covid-19, 24 March 2021, [url](#), p.12

HIV/AIDS²¹ and further stigmatisation of women, especially those in a vulnerable situation such as sex workers and single mothers who work as sex workers²². For example, the pandemic left women sex workers vulnerable to HIV testing. UNAIDS reports that the Horizon Femmes²³ ‘vowed to stay open during the pandemic’ in order to provide HIV tests to sex workers.²⁴

The stigmatisation of people positive to AIDS/HIV leads to their isolation from their family and the society.²⁵ UNICEF states that ‘the stigma of HIV, especially for infected women and children, limits the demand for services’.²⁶

3. Difference in treatment between the Anglophone and Francophone regions towards people with HIV/AIDS

Among all sources consulted within the time constraints for this COI Query response, no information could be found regarding the difference in treatment between the Anglophone and Francophone regions towards people with HIV/AIDS in Cameroon.

²¹ VOA, Cameroon’s HIV/AIDS Patients Shrink Hospitals for Fear of COVID-19, 26 November 2020, [url](#)

²² UNAIDS, Targeting sex workers is not the answer, 8 June 2020, [url](#)

²³ Nongovernmental organization that helps vulnerable women. Horizon Femmes, [url](#)

²⁴ UNAIDS, Targeting sex workers is not the answer, 8 June 2020, [url](#)

²⁵ USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 30 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁶ UNICEF, Cameroon Country Programme 2018-2020, Strategic Note, HIV/AIDS Programme 2018-2020, Draft, n.d., [url](#), p. 3

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