

Transforming Lives

Building Peace

Creating Hope

MILESTONES

ARCHDIOCESE OF BAMENDA



**Commission for
Justice and Peace**



Origin

Established in December 12, 2002, by His Grace, Fr. Paul VERDZEKOV, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Bamenda came to be after a unique exercise carried out by some Christians who served as Election Observers during the Twin Municipal and Parliamentary Elections that held on 30th June 2002. In a Message he addressed to the Christian Electoral Observers, the Archbishop said, **“What you did last June gives me well-founded hopes that, with your involvement and commitment, our Archdiocese should soon be able to boast of vibrant and dynamic Justice and Peace Commissions at all levels as demanded by Pope John Paul II in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa, 106-107”** These prophetic words produced the mustard seed that gave birth to the Commission which has grown in leaps and bounds over the years and has now become a household name.

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Bamenda is nevertheless part of a Universal Network of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace that was established in 1967 by Pope Paul VI, at the request of the Fathers of Vatican II. This request was further echoed by the Synod Fathers during the First Synod of African Bishops that held in Rome in 1994 on the theme: ‘The Church in Africa and its Evangelization Mission towards the year 2000’, which resulted to the promulgation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*. In this document, Pope John Pail II made a clarion call to all Episcopal Conferences to establish where they do not yet exist, Justice and Peace Commissions at various levels. In 1995, the Bishops of Cameroon responded to this exhortation by creating a Sub-Commission for Justice and Peace, which today is the Justice and Peace Department of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon. And at the level of the Sub-Region – Association of Episcopal Conferences in Africa and Madagascar (ACERAC), the Commission was created in 1999. At

Continental Level, there is the Department of Justice, Peace and Development in the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)'

VISION

The Justice and Peace Commission, Archdiocese of Bamenda believes in a transformed society in which there is respect for human dignity, equality and sustainable peace and development.

MISSION

Dedicated to working for justice, building peace, and promoting socially sustainable development in the light of the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Church.

OBJECTIVES AND MANDATE

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Bamenda draws inspiration and orientation from the objective and mandate of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace as defined by ***Pastor Bonus, Art. 142 § 1, 2, 3, and 143***. The mandate and objectives is however defined at this level in the following terms as;

- The promotion of justice and peace in the world, in the light of the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Church.
- Building peaceful societies by promoting all that enhances the dignity of the human person, denouncing and combating all that degrades and destroys the human person.
- Carrying out studies on justice and peace, the development of peoples and the violations on human rights and keep the Archbishop and related authorities duly informed of any such findings.
- Heighten awareness on the need to promote peace, above all on the occasion of the *World Day of Peace*.

STRUCTURE

The Archdiocese of Bamenda is made up of Small Christian Communities, Mission Stations, and, 34 parishes all grouped up into 6 deaneries for pastoral convenience. In principle the Justice and Peace Commission is present at every level of this Church structure.

The Commission at the level of the Archdiocese is made up of 12 elected members, 2 each from the 6 deanery commissions together with the staff of the coordination unit (office) who are appointed by the Archbishop and recruited according to the expertise as the case may be.

MILESTONES

2003

- Fund-raised assistance from MISEREOR for an initial support for 24 months.
- A fairly equipped office goes operational with a permanent and part-time staff; secretary and coordinator respectively.
- Provided support in the creation of 18 functional Parish Justice and Peace Commissions.
- Took part in ACERAC Justice and Peace Assembly in Djamena - Chad

2004

- The office visited all 28 parishes of the Archdiocese
- Successfully hosted the national training of Christian Election Observers training with participants of the 23 dioceses of the National Episcopal Conference.
- Participated in the observation of the Presidential Election and the production of the report, 'The Sovereignty of the Cameroonian People at Stake'

- Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provided technical support in enhancing capacities of justice and peace workers.

2005

- Successfully organized the first public event, a Symposium on Peace with Professor Titi Nwel as main guest speaker.
- Took part in the development and drafting of an Alternative Electoral Code for Cameroon.
- Contributed to the draft Law Against Child Trafficking and Slavery in Cameroon
- Active engagement in the fight against child trafficking and slavery
- His Grace Fr. Paul VERDZEKOV in a Message to all Christians on Child Trafficking identified with the work of the Commission.

2006

- Second successful fund-raising effort to support activities of the Commission from MISEREOR and CMC of the Netherlands for 36 months.
- Received financial and technical support from Catholic Relief Services to start off a pilot project in the fight against child trafficking in 2 communities; Mbessa and Fingeh
- Identified 32 trafficked victims
- Public presentation of the Alternative Electoral Code proposed by the Bishops of Cameroon.
- Staff strength increased to 3

2007

- Received financial and technical support for the second phase of the pilot project to combat child trafficking in Mbessa from Catholic Relief Services.
- Rehabilitated 21 trafficked victims

- Observed and monitored the Municipal and Parliamentary Election in Cameroon
- Took lead role in peace building efforts and post-conflict reconstruction in Mbessa- Oku and Bali-Bawock, 2 communities involved in violent inter-village conflicts.
- Staff strength increased by 2 volunteers
- Benefited from the HIPC Funds to implement project on 'Governance and Human Rights promotion in the North West Region'

2008

- Received financial assistance from CMC to rehabilitate women victims of trafficking and for a comprehensive law to combat human trafficking in Cameroon
- Trained 625 Paralegals and Social Mediators in the North West Region

2009

- Received financial assistance from the British High Commission to rehabilitate 20 victims of child trafficking
- Received funding from the US Department of State through the Catholic Relief Services to fight the trafficking of young girls and women for sexual exploitation.
- Created and equipped 7 Paralegal Centers in 7 Councils in the North West Region.
- Successfully organized a Conference to Counter Human Trafficking in Bamenda where survivors were supported with start-up tools.
- Hosted the Justice and Peace Website

2010

- Launched Citizenship Education Manual with the National Service of Justice and Peace
- Organized a colloquium to evaluate the implementation of the law against child trafficking and slavery of 2005. In

attendance were members of the Judiciary, Judicial Police Officers, other Forces of Law and Order, Mayors, Social Workers, victims and host families.

- Supported the prosecution and conviction of the first ever human trafficking offender in Cameroon.
- Set judicial precedence in the prosecution and conviction of trafficking related offences in Cameroon.
- Benefited from a 3 years technical assistance partnership with AGEH –Germany.
- Organized a counter human trafficking conference with the African Network Against Human Trafficking (ANAHT)

2011

- Undertook a pilot project on Peace Education in some schools within communities in conflict
- Observed and monitored the 2011 Presidential Election in Cameroon
- Launching of the Justice and Peace magazine on the JPC website

2012

- Successful organization of a session on Transformational Leadership for Peace with some traditional rulers
- Received financial assistance from the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (OHCHR) to rehabilitate 25 victims of child trafficking
- Launching of a new website for the Justice and Peace Commission

PUBLICATIONS

- Know your defense forces- 2012
- Peace Education Manual for Secondary Schools-2011
- Peace Education Manual for Primary Schools-2011
- The Judicial System in Cameroon-2011
- Training Handbook for Social Animators-2010

- An Illustrative Version on the Law of Trafficking In Cameroon-2009
- Flyer on Human Trafficking -2009
- Human Rights Manual for Community Education- 2009
- Understanding Justice and Peace and the Catholic Social Teaching- 2009
- Know Your Rights, Know the Law (FAQ on Criminal Matters)-2008
- Know Your Rights, Know the Law (FAQ on Civil Matters) -2008
- The Observer (Quarterly bulletin of the JPC-Vols I, 2 ,3 and 4)-2007
- Simplified Leaflets on the New Criminal Procedure Code-2006
- Red Card to Child Trafficking-2006
- Flyers on the 2005 Law of trafficking in Cameroon.-2006

VIDEOS/CDs

- Spot on Trafficking
- From Despair to Hope
- Sowing Seeds of Peace
- Giving Voice to Victims and Survivors
- Training for Christian Election Observers
- Session on Transformational Leadership for Peace

JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION ARCHDIOCESE OF BAMENDA	
Address:	P.O. Box 82 Bamenda North West Region Republic of Cameroon
Telephone:	(00237)77 67 74 07 (00237)33 02 79 37
Fax:	(00237)33 36 34 13
Email:	jpcbda_2002@yahoo.co.uk
Website:	www.justiceandpeacebamenda.org
Location:	Above Cathedral Big Mankon. 1 st Floor, Storey Building at the Entrance to the Archbishop's House.