

Notice of Receipt of a Request for Inspection and Decision Not to Register

CAMEROON – Urban Development Project (Loan No. 2244-CM) and Second Urban Project (Loan No. 2999-CM)

On September 5, 2007, the Inspection Panel (the “*Panel*”) received a Request for Inspection (the “*Request*”) related to the above-referenced Projects. The Request was submitted by inhabitants and people representing inhabitants of the Nylon zone, Douala, Cameroon. They claim to have been harmed and negatively affected by World Bank activities relating to the above-mentioned Projects. The first, the Urban Development Project, implemented over a 6-year period, included a component for development of Douala-Nylon, the city's least developed area, by: (a) providing basic infrastructure for 90,000 residents, as well as community facilities, pilot health education program, a retail market and technical assistance to artisans; and (b) carrying out a complete “*slum*” upgrading program for 13,000 inhabitants. This Project was approved in March 1983 and closed in June 1988. The objectives of the Second Urban Project were to consolidate the basis for sustainable urban development through, *inter alia*, priority urban infrastructure. This infrastructure component included the continuation of the development of the Nylon neighborhood undertaken under the Urban Development Project. This Project was approved in October 1988 and closed in June 1994. Both Projects are hereinafter referred to as “*the Projects*.”

In their letter to the Panel, the Requesters claim that the Projects have led to the destruction of their homes, possessions and resources. They state that, as a consequence of the Projects, about 500 people were forcefully evicted from their homes. They further state that many of these people have been without homes since then. According to the Requesters, the Government and local authorities have promised them new houses, but this has not yet happened. The Requesters assert that until today no compensation has been paid nor have they received appropriate housing. They believe that today there is no space left in the Nylon zone to accommodate the affected people. They claim that some people have died as a consequence of the situation. They also state that some of the affected people that have protested against this treatment have been subject to arrests and torture by the police and military. Further, they claim that the Projects have led to social conflicts between the civilian population and the government.

The Requesters complain that the World Bank did not provide any information about the Projects and that they did not learn about World Bank support for the Projects until 2003. They also claim that they were never consulted and that affected people did not have any participation on the activities included under the Projects.

The Requesters claim that the construction under the Projects placed an “*excessive*” financial burden on the people living in the Nylon zone because many of them have been deprived of their small scale commercial activities and wages. They explain that land that belonged to affected people was given to other businessmen while the affected people were forcefully evicted. Thus many commercially active affected people have lost their income.

According to the Requesters, many of the affected people have suffered from depression and have felt traumatized by the Projects. They criticize the Bank claiming that affected people did not receive any assistance or “*moral*” or “*psychological*” support. They also state that affected people have not benefited from the Project, and the rights of affected children ages 0-15

have not been respected. Overall, they believe, that the Projects have negatively impacted the life and social environment of the inhabitants of the Nylon zone. They explain that the Projects have impoverished the affected people and caused negative long-term impacts.

The Requesters claim that the Bank failed to conduct baseline studies and failed to conduct an adequate analysis of alternatives. They also state that the Bank agreed to the implementation of the Projects, despite the limited administrative and implementation capacity of Cameroon, and that the Bank - despite this situation - failed to take responsibility to address the negative impacts of the Projects. In regards to supervision, the Requesters claim that the Bank has failed to identify the problems that the Requesters describe. More specifically, the Requesters believe the Bank has not complied with OD 4.01 on Environmental Assessment, OD 13.05 on Supervision, OD 4.30 on Involuntary Resettlement, OD 4.15 on Poverty Reduction, OD 4.20 on Indigenous People, and the World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information.

In a subsequent communication, the Requesters indicated that they are not aware of the existence of any current World Bank projects that may be benefiting or affecting them. They noted, at the same time, that they have little means or ability to determine whether the World Bank actually is involved in a project which could affect them. Further, they request that the concerns of *“the 500 families in distress and in the streets for the past 20 years because of the mismanagement of an urban development project”* be taken into consideration within the relationship the Bank has with the Government of Cameroon. They also urge the Inspection Panel to assist in having their issues paid attention to.

In addition, as part of the attachments to the Request for Inspection, the Requesters included a correspondence received from the Bank, dated October 23, 2006, which came as a response to an earlier communications they had sent to the President of the World Bank. The Bank’s correspondence, signed by the Director of Operations for Cameroon at the time, stated *“[a]s we indicated to you in our previous letter of August 19, 2004, the Bank consistently requested the competent authorities to address the Nylon zone resettlement issue until the Second Urban project closed. Regrettably no satisfactory solution was implemented by the Government (...).”* The correspondence further states, *“[w]hile at this date, the Bank cannot hold any fiduciary responsibility for the Nylon project that was closed in June 1988, and cannot therefore, offer any assistance (...) we will continue to raise the resettlement issue with the authorities in the context of our on-going dialogue in the urban sector.”*

Under the eligibility criteria of the Panel, the Panel may not investigate Projects for which the loan has been closed or more than 95% disbursed. Furthermore, paragraph 22 of the Panel’s Operating Procedures provides that the Panel Chairperson will not register Requests if he or she finds that the Request is without doubt manifestly outside the Panel’s mandate. Because the Projects closed, respectively, on June 30, 1988, and June 30, 1994, on October 17, 2007 the Panel informed the Board of Executive Directors that it did not register the Request in the Panel’s Register and will not process it further, and advised the Requesters of this decision. The Panel notes, however, the many significant concerns stated by the Requesters, described above, as well as the perception of the Requesters that a promise to deal with their problems has been made in correspondence sent by Management to the Requesters.