

### HIGHLIGHTS

- World Humanitarian Day 2019 celebrations highlighted the lifesaving role of humanitarian actions in Cameroon’s North West, South West and Far North regions.
- UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Allegra Baiocchi stressed the need for a more robust response when visiting persons displaced by Boko Haram violence from Zheleved to Moskota.
- Thousands have reportedly fled the North West and South West regions as lock down looms on the eve of schools resumption.

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### CHIFFRES CLÉS



4,3M

Personnes dans le besoin



2,3M

Personnes ciblées



395K

Réfugiés



800K

Personnes déplacées internes



246K

Retournés



299M

Financement requis

66M

Financés

22%

Couverture

## #Womenhumanitarians in Cameroon playing a crucial role in responding to humanitarian crises

Yaounde, 28 August 2019 – Women are playing a central role in tackling the multiple humanitarian crises in Cameroon and bringing relief to the affected communities.

“The engagement of women helps families survive, increases communities’ resilience, and makes aid operations more effective,” said Allegra Del Pilar Baiocchi, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon during commemorative activities marking the 2019 World Humanitarian Day. “Women have to be involved in every part of humanitarian action: in their families and communities, as professional humanitarians, and at the leadership level.”

From 16 to 20 August, Ms. Baiocchi travelled to different regions of Cameroon to visit humanitarian operations and celebrate World Humanitarian Day with first responders and affected communities. She met with humanitarian actors and local representatives in Kumba, Meme division in the South West, and in Moskota, Mayo Tsanaga division in the Far North Region, and visited humanitarian fairs in Buea and Maroua.



**Three #womenhumanitarians in the far north recognized for their role in reaching people in need**

“Despite being the most affected by crisis, women have shown great resolve to deal with the precarious situation. Their efforts ensure that assistance reaches thousands of displaced persons. And they raise their voices to call for restraint and propose solutions”, said Ms. Baiocchi. “I commend the tremendous work women are doing. Often with limited resources, their engagement makes a vital difference for thousands of families”.

On World Humanitarian Day, on 19 August, the world commemorates humanitarian workers killed and injured in the line of duty, while honoring those who continue to work tirelessly to provide life-saving support to people most in need.

Paying tribute to humanitarians in Cameroon, Ms. Baiocchi also emphasized the critical importance of the principles of humanitarian assistance. “Humanitarian actors come to support those most affected by conflict,” she said. “Their action is governed by

neutrality, impartiality and independence. Humanitarians need to be trusted, they need to be protected, and be given safe and sustained access to affected people.”

Since 2014, Cameroon has been grappling with numerous crises and growing humanitarian needs. In the Far North, Lake Chad region, attacks by armed groups have caused massive civilian suffering, more than 370,000 people are struggling with the effects of forced displacement. The East region continues to host some 250,000 Central African refugees. Since 2017, conflict in the North West and South West regions has caused internal displacement and deeply affected social services.

Across the country, over 4.3 million people are in need of assistance. The humanitarian response plan is seeking US\$ 299 million to bring relief to the most vulnerable. By August 2019, only 22 per cent of the required had been received, making Cameroon the most underfunded emergency in West and Central Africa.

## Signing of Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Central African Republic living in Cameroon

After having signed several peace agreements to end the civil war in the Central African Republic (CAR), the government of CAR and 14 armed groups signed the latest peace agreement on 06 February 2019 in Bangui, following negotiations in Sudan. This agreement represents an important step in strengthening the Accord Politique pour la Paix et la Reconciliation en Republique Centrafricaine (APPR) and turning the hope for peace and reconciliation among Central Africans into reality.

With over 800 kilometres of border line with CAR, Cameroon remains the main destination for Central Africans in search of safety. More than 280,000 CAR refugees are currently hosted in East, Adamawa and North regions, as well as those living in urban areas like Yaoundé and Douala.

By Mid-June, 203 households of 662 individuals had expressed the wish to return home, representing 202 households of 659 individuals from Lolo and one household of three individuals from Kentzou. To formalize this intention of return, the Governments of Cameroon, Central African Republic and UNHCR decided to lay down the practical modalities to ensure safe and dignified returns.

On 29 June, these parties signed a Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Central African refugees living in Cameroon. The two Governments and the UN refugee agency



**Group photograph after the signing ceremony at the ministry of Territorial Administration in Yaoundé, Cameroon.**

defined in this agreement document, the legal framework and modalities for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of CAR refugees to their places of origin, specifically those where there is calm.

This important document was signed by Cameroon's Minister for Territorial Administration, the Central African Republic's Minister for Humanitarian Action and the Representatives of UNHCR in Cameroon in the presence of the Resident Coordinator of the UN system in Cameroon, heads of UN agencies and Ambassadors from the Central African Republic, Canada, Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, United Kingdom, Nigeria, Japan, Switzerland and the European Union, among others.

In the meantime, UNHCR together with its partners continues to assist the refugee population in Cameroon as a whole while the repatriation process is being engaged. The UN refugee agency will as well assist those who choose to stay back in Cameroon to maintain their refugee status and continue to benefit from the protection of the Cameroonian authorities. Those qualified for resettlement will be assisted as well.

In line with laying down the practical modalities for the voluntary repatriation process, the first meeting of the tripartite technical working group (comprising the two governments and UNHCR) is scheduled to take place in the first week of August 2019 in Bangui, Central African Republic.



*Deputy Representative of UNHCR Cameroon, Mr Geert Castele during the signing.*



*Handshake of the Cameroonian Minister for Territorial Administration and the CAR Minister for Humanitarian Action.*

## Launching of "SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION" - skills acquisition Programme in the Far North Region.

On 11 June 2019, UN Women in partnership with the Ministries of Women's Empowerment and the Family, and of Employment and Vocational training, launched a Second Chance Education (SCE) vocational training programme at the Minawao refugee camp. The main objective of the project is to ensure that marginalized and displaced young women have access to high-quality learning, entrepreneurship development and employment opportunities, to facilitate their socio-economic integration.

300 young girls and women aged between 15 and 25 years, either school dropouts or who have never been to school, are to be trained on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), tailoring, agriculture, livestock rearing and



*Beneficiaries take group photograph after the launching of the SCE project*

petty trading. UN Women has made a donation of 75 sewing machines and 6 computer sets to support the project. The equipment was fairly distributed to three selected sites (Mokolo, Minawao for Mayo-Tsanaga division and Mora for Mayo-Sava division, all in the Far North Region).

Within a context where harmful and discriminatory social norms often prevent young women from being educated and developing their skills, the SCE programme brings a message of optimism and hope to the community, one of promoting "strong and self-reliant girls and women."

## NORTHWEST / SOUTHWEST: increasing humanitarian capacities in a challenging environment

For almost three years now, Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions (NWSW) are in a violent conflict opposing pro-independence fighters to State armed forces. Hundreds have died, most of them civilians, as well as over 200 security officers. By December 2018, internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the NWSW had reached 440,000. More than 35,000 have sought refuge in Nigeria. In June 2019, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) described the crises as the most neglected displacement crises in the world.<sup>1</sup>

### Deteriorating protection situation



*Attacks and destruction of property have increased displacements*

The Protection situation in the NWSW regions continues to deteriorate with continued reports of restriction on movements through State-run checkpoints and harassment and abuse of civilians. Freedom of movement has further been complicated by difficulties in obtaining civil status documents following a Government decree to process civil status documents only on Mondays, a "ghost town" day in the regions. There are continued reports of arbitrary arrests by the State security forces with victims mostly young men who are suspected to be members of non-State armed groups. Moreover, there are reports of extra-judicial killings perpetrated by both parties to the conflict. Victims include women, children and older persons. The education boycott remains effective especially in areas outside the main cities. Non-State armed groups (NSAGs) have continued attacking and abusing individuals they suspect to be Government

sympathizers. The precarious security situation has forced many civilians into displacement and disrupted their sources of livelihood.

### Multiple and increasing access constraints

Humanitarian actors, responding to the crisis, have since 2018 been **operating in a difficult environment**. Humanitarian organizations are facing many challenges including ongoing hostilities, roadblocks, Government and NSAGs' security checkpoints, bureaucratic impediments and confiscation of aid supplies. On 23 June, armed groups burnt down trucks carrying WFP supplies in Pinyin (NW). However, the humanitarian convoy was not marked with UN or partner logo. Non-State armed Groups have imposed a ghost town every Monday in both regions and increasingly order lockdowns on other days. This hampers people's movements and therefore hinders humanitarian operations.

Between May and June, abductions doubled. Armed groups are increasingly using abductions to demand ransom or to force some people to adhere to their demands. In recent months, NSAGs are turning to the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). These IEDs have so far killed four soldiers and one teenager, injuring many others. But progress is being made to expand access, including through engagement and negotiations with all parties to the conflict. In a recent interview

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nrc.no/shorthand/fr/the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crisis/index.html>

with Sky News, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator reiterated his call on all parties to respect international human rights and international humanitarian law. He called on them to facilitate safe, timely, and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations to deliver life-saving aid to the most vulnerable. OCHA has continued to advocate for an end to harassments of humanitarians. It chairs the Communication and Access Working Groups (WG). These WGs seek solutions to humanitarian access and acceptance.



*Humanitarian aid workers identifying persons in need*

Despite this difficult situation, **humanitarian actors are scaling up** their intervention in the two regions. Twelve UN institutions are now present in Buea (SW). Eight have permanent staffing in Bamenda. The eight clusters and two Areas of Responsibilities (AoR) that the UN had activated in both regions are functioning. OCHA regularly chairs the Humanitarian Coordination Forum (HCF), bringing together all humanitarian actors.

Humanitarian organizations have continued to distribute food and NFIs in the two regions. WFP recently started scaling up its food distribution programme to reach 250,000 people in both regions, most of whom are in the NW. The population has benefited from WASH, hygiene promotion and GBV psychosocial support activities. Humanitarians have also created GBV Safe Spaces and Child Friendly

spaces (CFS).

Development NGOs which had been in the two regions prior to the crisis are joining the humanitarian intervention. More than 100 national development NGOs are now doing humanitarian work. Many international NGOs have increased their presence in the NWSW. In June and July, international NGOs carried out relief activities in seven of the 13 divisions of the two regions. National NGOs reported to have made distributions in 12 of the 13 divisions. A UNDP small grants facility for early recovery launched in May 2019 is sponsoring 18 early recovery projects in the NWSW.

To ease the scaling up, the UN and partners have organised more than 20 trainings in both regions with an aim to build local capacities.

The Government is also active in the NWSW, distributing food and NFIs. In June 2019, the Government set up two Humanitarian Coordination Centres (HCCs), one in Buea and another in Bamenda. The HCC implements the Government's humanitarian plan and aims to coordinate humanitarian activities in the two regions. OCHA, on behalf of the humanitarian community, is engaging the HCC to develop Standard Operating Procedures with regards to humanitarian activities, in line with humanitarian principles.

## Maintenir le dialogue entre humanitaire et militaire dans les situations de conflit



*Une vue partielle des acteurs militaire sur le terrain dans l'extrême nord*

Du 24 au 31 juillet 2019, OCHA a organisé deux séries de formations sur la Coordination Civilo-militaire (CMCoord) respectivement à Maroua et à Kousséri dans la région de l'Extrême Nord. Au-delà des concepts propres à la CMCoord, ces formations proposaient également de modules détaillés sur le Droit International Humanitaire, la protection des civils dans les conflits, la protection de l'enfance, les violences basées sur le genre, le droit au logement et à la terre, le caractère civil et humanitaire de l'asile ou encore l'accès humanitaire.

Plus de 50 officiers et sous-officiers de différents corps d'armées et de la police, et plus de 70 personnels d'organisation humanitaire ont activement participé à ces formations. Ces formations académiques répondent à une forte demande des acteurs militaires d'une part, et des organisations humanitaires d'autre part. Dispensées par des experts militaires et des spécialistes issus d'organisation humanitaires, elles visent à promouvoir les principes humanitaires et l'ensemble du DIH et

à renforcer la compréhension mutuelle des rôles respectifs des acteurs civils et des militaires opérant dans un contexte comme celui de l'Extrême Nord.

**Pour plus d'informations, veuillez contacter :**

**Modibo Traoré**, Chef de Bureau, <mailto:traorem@un.org>

**Victoria Martínez**, Chargé des Affaires Humanitaires, [martinezv@un.org](mailto:martinezv@un.org)

**Fonyuy Kiven Timothy**, Public Information Officer, [kiven.fonyuy@un.org](mailto:kiven.fonyuy@un.org)

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