



## Data on gender equality in Cameroon

*Crises in Cameroon affect girls, boys, women and men differently. Being a young boy, an adolescent girl, an adult man or an elderly woman greatly determines the role that everyone plays in the family and the community, but also their experience, their abilities and their priorities in terms of what should deliver humanitarian assistance and protection services. As humanitarian actors, it is our responsibility to understand these differences and to provide an assistance that assists all segments of the population, while not putting anyone at risk. This paper aims to help the humanitarian community in Cameroon - particularly OCHA and the sectors - in the development of their Humanitarian Needs Assessment (HNO) for 2020<sup>1</sup>.*

## KEY FIGURES

- While 39% of the national population lives below the poverty line, this rate rises to 51.5% for women. 79.2% of them are underemployed.
- Only 3% of women own a house without a property title and 1.6% own a property title in their name.
- Women make up 71.6% of workers in the informal agricultural sector
- 32.5% of women over 25 have some level of secondary education (39.2% for men).
- Boys have a privileged access to education: Their gross enrollment rate is 125% in primary school (110% for girls). 65% are enrolled in secondary school (53% for girls)
- The percentage of women in parliament in 2017 was 27.1%
- The prevalence of under-five malnutrition is higher among boys than girls.
- On average, every Cameroonian woman gives birth to 5.1 children.
- The maternal mortality rate is of 782 per 100,000 live births.
- The rate of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years giving birth to a child is 105.8 per 1000.
- HIV prevalence among 15-49-year old is 5% for women and 2.3% for men
- 43.2% of women in union face domestic violence. 39.8% and 14.5% respectively face emotional and sexual violence. In all, 56.4% of women in union were confronted with at least one of these forms of violence
- Young men and men are more likely to face arbitrary arrests, forced recruitment and extrajudicial executions and are more at risk of injury or death directly related to the conflict.
- Women spend an average of 8.2 hours more per week than men on unpaid household tasks
- 16.8% of women benefit of a credit for any use

<sup>1</sup> Document prepared by Delphine Brun, Inter-agency GenCap advisor for Cameroon, 17th of October 2019.

Discrimination between girls and boys, women and men remain a major obstacle to human development in Cameroon. **The country ranks 141st among the 189 countries ranked in relation to their level of gender inequality<sup>2</sup>.** The inequality index reveals significant disparities in the three key dimensions of human development: reproductive health, education and access to employment.

Gender relations and the perception that women and men have of their role and that of the opposite sex anchor, justify and maintain unequal practices within households and society. These inequalities reveal themselves in different ways in crisis-affected areas, as explained below.

### **Gender roles and workloads:**

In Cameroon, the responsibility for the various daily activities - preparing meals, fetching and storing water, taking care of the children's hygiene and household hygiene, taking care of dependent people in the family and community (people in a situation of disability, older or sick people orphans) primarily relies on women and girls. Women spend an average of 8.2 hours more per week than men on unpaid household tasks. As a result, and because these tasks require significant daily investment, women are particularly affected by lack of access to income-generating activities. It also means less resting time and a lower access to spare-time activities and decision-making forums.

In displacement situations, women's workload increases significantly due to a morbidity on the rise, resulting in increased care. Also, daily tasks, such as collecting water or firewood, often become more difficult.

This division of roles and responsibilities has evolved, particularly in areas affected by conflict. For example, men find it more difficult to find a job, because of insecurity, and because, as a result of displacement, they are no longer part of the informal networks that would allow them to access income generating activities. As a result, they struggle to provide for their families, a situation that compromises their role as head of household. At the same time, to earn a living, women take on new responsibilities while continuing to care for the home. In the Northwest and South West, for example, men report having lower incomes than those reported by women. The growing economic role of women gives them greater decision-making power over domestic and educational issues within their homes<sup>3</sup>.

While men seek to replicate the masculine ideals of support and head of household, the current political and economic context puts them under increasing pressure. The possession of economic power as an instrument of male domination is undermined. The crisis context, and the economic hardship it generates, is perceived by some as "devirilizing". Men's frustration at being unemployed, unable to fulfill the socially expected role of provider and protector of the family, combined with the fact that violence is considered socially acceptable in some communities, leads to a recourse to domestic violence as a means of asserting their authority and domination. For example, in the South West and North West, women say they are more affected by domestic violence. The prevailing model of "hegemonic masculinity" creates a general climate of violence, indicating the need for holistic approaches that would enable men to make non-violent life choices.

### **Access and control of resources:**

The use, possession and control by women of household resources is all the weaker as the good is of value, whether it is social (prestige) or economic. Thus, only 3% of women own a house without a land title and 1.6% own a land title in their name<sup>4</sup>. Women have access to plots that they cultivate<sup>5</sup>. But this access to the land does not allow them to have control of it, not enjoying inheritance rights from their parents and husbands. Thus, when the land is at stake, women have little opportunity to assert their rights.

Women's access to credit is also limited: 16.8% of women receive credit for any use. The unpaid workload that reproductive work implies, combined with the fact that women have extremely limited access and

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP, *Gender inequality index*, 2017

<sup>3</sup> CARE & PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Rapid Gender Analysis, South West and North West Cameroon*, April May 2019.

<sup>4</sup> ONU Femmes Cameroun, *Rapport annuel 2018*, p. 9

<sup>5</sup> CARE, *Analyse Rapide Genre*, p2, 2014

control over resources, partly explains why the female population is more affected by poverty: While 39% of the population lives below the poverty line, this rate rises to 51.5% for women. Of these, 79.2% are underemployed<sup>6</sup>.

Regarding the distinct access of women and men to humanitarian aid, a systematic analysis in the different affected regions remains necessary.

In the Far North, some men, confronted to a declining domination power due to their decreasing economic role, confiscated the official documents of their wives, such documents often being required to access humanitarian aid<sup>7</sup>.

### **Participation in decision-making and public life:**

Although women are numerically the majority of Cameroon's young and adult population, they are largely excluded from security operations, conflict resolution processes and peace-building in general.<sup>8</sup> Only 4.21% of the population would perceive women as actresses in conflict management<sup>9</sup>. Most of the peace mechanisms and processes in Cameroon do not include women and, in addition, relegate them to the status of victims.

At the national level, the representation of women remains very low. Besides the National Assembly, where considerable progress has been made with 30.5% of women, other institutions lag behind: the government has 6% women, while they were 27.1% in parliament in 2017<sup>10</sup>. From 2013 to 2018, the proportion of female mayors is of 8,3%<sup>11</sup>. Mirroring national indicators, the social status of women in the community is unenviable, with little participation in community decisions. In all ethnic groups, men control all the family's strategic assets (land, livestock, money, children's education, access to health care, etc.) and, as a result, have full decision-making authority over these aspects. As for the woman, she controls domestic utensils, the management of daily food rations, water and household hygiene. Adolescent girls are also largely excluded from family and community decision-making and have seldom options to ensure they are heard<sup>12</sup>.

Although women and youth have networks (women's tontine groups, young men's association), they have little or no involvement in decision-making at the community level. Decisions are made by the village chief, surrounded by his council and village notables (usually exclusively men)<sup>13</sup>. Thus, despite the predominant role of women in agricultural production and in the domestic economy, men have a privileged access to public community meetings and often take the decisions that affect the entire community.

### **Demographics of IDPs, refugees and returnees:**

Based on data provided by IOM's *Displacement Tracking Matrix* and by UNHCR, the distribution by sex and age of IDPs, refugees and returnees can be analyzed as follows:

- The displaced and refugee population is young: Nearly 55 per cent of CAR refugees are children under 18 years of age. This rate is respectively 60% and 62% in the Far North among refugees and among the displaced people under 18 years. Girls and boys aged 0 to 17 account for 44 per cent of the displaced population and almost 40 per cent of refugees in the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest. There is a balanced number of girls and boys displaced, refugees or returnees in the three crisis contexts that Cameroon experiences.

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<sup>6</sup> ONU Femmes Cameroun, *Rapport...*, p. 9

<sup>7</sup> ONU Femmes, *Audit de sécurité combiné aux cartographies de risques et de vulnérabilité dans le contexte des violences basées sur le genre*, p.6, juillet 2018

<sup>8</sup> WILPF, *Cameroon country context*. To protest the situation, Northwestern and Southwestern women organized anti-violence protest campaigns, dressed in black on the first and last Wednesdays of the month, determined to continue until a solution to the conflict is found. (OCHA, *Cameroon : North-West and South-West situation report No 8*, p.2, June 2019).

<sup>9</sup> WILPF Cameroun, *Rapport de l'Etude de base pour l'élaboration du Plan d'Action de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et des Résolutions connexes au Cameroun*, Février 2017

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Cameroon-UPR\\_EnglishWEB-FINAL-.pdf](http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Cameroon-UPR_EnglishWEB-FINAL-.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Annuaire Statistique du MINPROFF, Edition 2014, p.31

<sup>12</sup> Plan international, *Les adolescentes dans la crise prolongée : la crise du lac Tchad*, juin 2018

<sup>13</sup> CARE, *Analyse...*, p2

Crisis	Sex	Age	Displaced	Refugees (CAR, Nigeria and other nationalities)	Returnees (Former IDPs)	
CAR crisis (Adamaoua, Center, East, North)	Girls	0 to 17 y.o.		27,17%		
		18 to 59 y.o.		22,83%		
	Women	+ 59 y.o.		1,54%		
		Female population			51,53%	
	Boys	0 to 17 y.o.		27,53%		
		18 to 59 y.o.		18,90%		
	Men	+ 59 y.o.		2,04%		
		Male population			48,47%	
Far North crisis	Girls	0 to 17 y.o.	30,00%	30,26%	30,00%	
		18 to 59 y.o.	18,00%	20,90%	18,00%	
	Women	+ 59 y.o.	1,00%	2,16%	1,00%	
		Female population			49,00%	53,33%
	Boys	0 to 17 y.o.	32,00%	30,20%	32,00%	
		18 to 59 y.o.	17,00%	14,23%	17,00%	
	Men	+ 59 y.o.	2,00%	2,24%	2,00%	
		Male population			51,00%	46,67%
South West and North West crisis (Adamaoua, Littoral, North-West, West, South-West)	Girls	0 to 17 y.o.	22,17%	20,05%	22,65%	
		18 to 59 y.o.	26,39%	24,93%	26,22%	
	Women	+ 59 y.o.	2,78%	0,79%	2,95%	
		Female population			51,33%	45,78%
	Boys	0 to 17 y.o.	21,91%	19,70%	22,27%	
		18 to 59 y.o.	24,54%	33,96%	23,71%	
	Men	+ 59 y.o.	2,21%	0,56%	2,21%	
		Male population			48,67%	54,22%

- In terms of the sex distribution of the population, there is a higher proportion of women than men among refugees from CAR and those from the Far North. Conversely, in the crisis affecting the Northwest and the South West, refugee men are significantly more numerous than refugee women of the same age group.
- Sex distribution of IDPs and returnees is balanced. These demographic elements must be considered in humanitarian programming: Where adult women are the majority, this means that many find themselves in the role of heads of their family, a factor of great social and economic vulnerability. For instance, female headed households represent 31% of households in the South-West and 38% of households in the North-West, which represents an increase of about 10% compared to 2017<sup>14</sup>. This lone female population is at risk of gender-based violence, particularly of sexual abuse and exploitation. Also, a male-dominated adult population may increase the protection risks women face, but also their workload, as women are in such instances responsible for undertaking the domestic and cooking chores for an increased number of people.
- The elderly population, even though it represents only about 5% of the overall groups discussed here, needs special attention due to their age-related vulnerability, especially when they have lost, as a result of migration, the family networks and community support they benefited from previously.

<sup>14</sup> WFP, *Emergency food security assessment North West and South West*, p. 23, January 2019



### Health:

- The maternal mortality rate is high (782 deaths per 100,000 live births).
- The birth rate among adolescent girls, aged 15 to 19, is 105.8 births per 1,000 girls<sup>15</sup>.
- In recent years, maternal and infant mortality has increased as women practice traditional deliveries in the bush with various risks to their babies' health and their own health<sup>16</sup>. In some areas of the Southwest and Northwest, only 6% of women give birth in health centers<sup>17</sup>. The low rate of assisted deliveries, inadequate management of obstetric complications and limited access to health services contribute to an increased maternal mortality.
- 5% of women and 2.3% of men aged 15 to 64 live with HIV / AIDS<sup>18</sup>. Women are less knowledgeable than men about how to prevent the sexual transmission of STDs and HIV / AIDS<sup>19</sup>.
- Risk taking behavior, sexual violence and the use of prostitution as a survival strategy lead to an increase in infectious diseases, especially HIV / AIDS. Lack of access to contraceptive methods, combined with low coverage of sexual and reproductive health services, reinforces this problem. Young people (adolescent girls in particular) are the most exposed to risky behavior, resulting in early pregnancy, unsafe abortion and STDs.
- Because of the beliefs about the use of contraceptive methods, girls have very little access to them. In the South West and North West, the male condom remains the most common method of preventing STDs and unwanted pregnancies<sup>20</sup>.
- In South West and North West, people living with HIV who were on ARVs can no longer access drugs when they are in the bush, increasing the risk of contamination<sup>21</sup>.
- Fear of social stigma, concerns about parents rejecting them, poverty and impossibility of sharing with the father of the future baby parental responsibilities, push some pregnant girls to terminate their pregnancies. In the Southwest and Northwest, while 61% of them seek help at the hospital, 56% of them use traditional doctors, 28% do this at home, using drugs or other methods<sup>22</sup>.



### Education:

- The percentage of women over 25 with some secondary education is 32.5% compared to 39.2% for men.
- Young girls in university studies focus primarily on humanities, social studies, law and social and economic management studies. They represent only 32.3% of the students in sciences, school streams that are more promising in terms of employment<sup>23</sup>.
- For more than three years, tens of thousands of children in the Far North, North-West and South-West of Cameroon have not been able to return to school.
- In areas still offering schooling possibilities, boys are in some cases privileged when school fees cannot be paid for all: While they go to class, girls are responsible for domestic chores and small trade to support their families. This tendency takes place in a national environment already favoring, before the crisis, the boys' education: In elementary school, 110% of girls against 125% of boys are enrolled (gross rate of schooling). In secondary school, the gap widens, with 53% of girls enrolled compared to 65% of boys<sup>24</sup>.
- Beyond the costs associated with schooling, adolescent girls face additional barriers, particularly in secondary school, mainly because of the burden of household chores. The safety conditions and distances to go to school are also important barriers to education. Poverty and displacement have caused many girls to never go to school<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

<sup>16</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*, p.4

<sup>17</sup> IMC, July 2018

<sup>18</sup> *Rapport de l'enquête CAMPHIA 2018*

<sup>19</sup> Annuaire Statistique du MINPROFF, p.84

<sup>20</sup> CARE & PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*, p.4

<sup>22</sup> CARE & PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Ibid*, p. 7

<sup>23</sup> Annuaire statistique MINESUP 2012

<sup>24</sup> Annuaire statistique de l'éducation 2018

<sup>25</sup> Plan International, *Ibid*, p.52



### Food Security :

- Economic activity has been heavily impacted by the conflict. Displacement meant a loss of resources for food self-reliance. It primarily affects the access to a land to cultivate, the loss of livestock and of the family's productive assets. Men, who are overwhelmingly the titled landowners<sup>26</sup>, are affected by the spoliation of their property or by the fact that it has become inaccessible. Women are also heavily affected: The rural sector is mainly driven by women who represent 71.6% in the informal agricultural sector<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, in the Northwest and South West, many women working as tailors and sewers had to leave behind their sewing machine, plunging them into a very precarious economic situation. The men, who were wage earners, gave up their jobs or left the city because they could not continue their work due to the prevailing insecurity<sup>28</sup>.
- The North West and South West markets are dominated by retailers who make up around 60% of all merchants. In the Northwest, 72% of small retailers are women. Men dominate wholesale trade in both regions, with most male traders (61%) being wholesalers. Clients are mainly men, indicating a potential risk of protection for women along the roads and at the market<sup>29</sup>.
- Men working in transport between the economic capital and the villages of the South-West region, see their activity slowed down by insecurity and restricted movement of people and goods. The recurrent blockades that impede cross-border trade with Nigeria would particularly affect the commercial activity of women, who marketed food from there<sup>30</sup>.
- Food insecurity particularly affects displaced populations. The food security index indicates that 50 percent of the displaced in the northwest and 41 percent of the displaced in the south-west are food insecure<sup>31</sup>. Male heads of household, in both regions, and regardless of their status, would be more affected by severe food insecurity than female heads of households, except for the Northwest where women of the local population are significantly more affected.
- The increase in food prices, as is the case in Buea, affects the entire population. However, adaptation strategies are distinct. Girls are the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation to meet their food needs. Pregnant and lactating girls and women, as well as young children, would be affected by an insufficient and insufficiently varied diet<sup>32</sup>.
- While no study at this stage has made it possible to understand how food, in the event of a shortage, is shared among members of the same household, it is very possible that, as has been observed in other crises, some members are favored in the quantity and in the quality of the diet received, based on their age and gender. For example, adolescent girls in the Far North are reported to let young family members eat first<sup>33</sup>. More information to understand how intra-family dynamics affect each person's food security should be collected.



### Nutrition:

- The prevalence of malnutrition among boys under 5 is higher than for girls of the same age group, regardless of the anthropometric index used. Thus, 33.5% of boys against 29.8% of girls were stunted in 2014<sup>34</sup>. The reasons for the difference between the malnutrition rate of boys and girls should be further analyzed in order to inform the response.
- Recent data on the nutritional situation in the South West and North West indicate that boys are generally more affected by moderate chronic malnutrition (MAM) and severe chronic malnutrition. Only in the North-West is there a higher rate of MAM among girls (1.8% vs. 1.5% of boys). However, they remain significantly more affected by severe malnutrition (3.6% vs. 1.8% for girls)<sup>35</sup>.
- There is no significant difference in the way girls and boys aged 0 to 23 months are breastfed or in the duration of their breastfeeding<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> In 2011, 2.7% of women own a house with land title and 2.8% own land with land title (Annuaire Statistique du MINPROFF, p.65)

<sup>27</sup> Annuaire Statistique du MINPROFF, p.59

<sup>28</sup> Le Monde, *L'Ouest Anglophone du Cameroun en quasi faillite*, 20 août 2019

<sup>29</sup> WFP, *Ibid*, p. 25

<sup>30</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*, p.6

<sup>31</sup> WFP, *Ibid*, p.19

<sup>32</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*, p.5

<sup>33</sup> Plan International, *Ibid*, p.52

<sup>34</sup> MICS 5 Cameroun, 2014

<sup>35</sup> WFP, *Ibid*, p. 23

<sup>36</sup> MICS 5, *Ibid*



## Water, hygiene and sanitation:

- IDPs share shelter, water points, latrines and showers with host populations. This increased promiscuity does not give girls and women the required privacy, exposing them to the risk of violence<sup>37</sup>.
- Given the demographic pressure that displacement has created in the various affected regions, the water supply remains insufficient. This implies, for girls, boys and women in charge of collecting water, to walk long distances.
- This has effects on their safety. Thus, the presence of Boko Haram in the forests or bush of the Far North is an unprecedented danger for women in search of natural resources<sup>38</sup>. These tasks also represent a time investment that affects their ability to study or to engage in income-generating activities<sup>39</sup>.
- In peri-urban or local areas, girls and women are often harassed when they go to the bathroom. The taboos surrounding defecation and menstruation, combined with the recurrent lack of privacy of toilet facilities, push some girls and women to use toilets and showers only after dark.
- Menstrual hygiene remains a sensitive topic that is difficult for young girls to approach in the family setting. They are unprepared and, in some cases, do not know what happens to them when their first period occurs. Since menstruation is commonly considered dirty, girls and women are excluded from certain activities during menstruation.
- In the south-west and north-west, displaced girls have the greatest difficulty in accessing the necessary sanitary materials, using toilet paper, tree leaves, sponges or pieces of cloth, which they clean with soap when it is available. Survival sex is sometimes motivated by obtaining the money needed for hygienic material<sup>40</sup>. The lack of personal hygiene equipment, combined with limited access to adequate sanitation facilities, is also a barrier to their education.<sup>41</sup>



## Protection:

- Girls and boys, women and men are distinctly affected by the violation of their rights. In all crisis-affected regions, protection risks are often different, depending on gender, age and diversity. Beyond the popular belief that girls and women would form the vast majority of those facing security challenges, both halves of the population are truly affected. For example, for the two Southwestern and Northwestern regions, for the period from January to June 2019, 55.3% of the victims of violations of their rights were female, compared to 44.7% of boys and men<sup>42</sup>.
- IDPs are the most vulnerable category, with girls and women being the most affected because of their lower social and economic status, compounded by displacement: they form the majority of victims of sexual violence (89% of registered survivors in June for South West and North West were girls and women<sup>43</sup>).
- Many women have become widowed as a result of the crisis. Thus, they represent 31% of households in the South-West and 38% of households in the North-West, which represents an increase of about 10% compared to 2017<sup>44</sup>. They are at risk of gender-based violence, particularly the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Girls, as well as women who became heads of family because of the enlistment or death of their husbands, sometimes use survival sex to provide for their families. In some cases, these sexual relationships are in exchange for the release of husbands and sons<sup>45</sup>. In the Far North, displaced girls and women are sometimes detained, used as "bargaining chips" with the Government or as suicide bombers<sup>46</sup>.
- Adolescent boys are particularly at risk of forced recruitment by armed groups.

<sup>37</sup> IRC Cameroon Country Program, *Gender Based Violence -Rapid Assessment*, South West Region, January 2019.

<sup>38</sup> ONU Femmes, *Audit...*, p.8

<sup>39</sup> Plan International, *Ibid*, p.8

<sup>40</sup> CARE & PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Ibid*, p. 5

<sup>41</sup> Plan International, *Ibid*, p.48

<sup>42</sup> OCHA, *Cameroon: Humanitarian snapshot in South-West and North-West regions*, June 2019

<sup>43</sup> OCHA, *Cameroon...*, p.6

<sup>44</sup> WFP, *Ibid*, p. 13

<sup>45</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*, p.2

<sup>46</sup> CARE, *Suffering in Silence: The 10 most under-reported humanitarian crises of 2017*, p.8.

- In the North, South West and North West, young men and men are more likely to face arbitrary arrests, beatings, torture and extrajudicial executions<sup>47</sup>. They are also at greater risk of being targeted by armed attacks and are more at risk of injury or death directly related to the conflict.
- Men, because they enjoyed a privileged access to property over women before the crisis, are directly affected by the spoliation of their land and their home.
- Women, men, boys and girls who have experienced violence and have seen loved ones abused and killed, sometimes suffer of psychological trauma<sup>48</sup>.



### Child protection:

- Adolescent girls are a particularly vulnerable group because of the combined effect of their age and of gender-based discrimination, resulting in specific threats against them and denying their equal access to services. While 11.4% of girls under 15 and 36% of girls aged 18 are married in Cameroon<sup>49</sup>, the crisis in the different regions has led to an increase in this phenomenon. While the ideal age for a girl to marry was 18 years before the crisis, more and more girls are being pushed to get married between 14 and 17 years old. In particular, girls who have stopped school are increasingly confronted with early marriages but also with unwanted pregnancies, because of being married too soon and because they are increasingly the targets of sexual violence. Early marriage is a strategy to prevent early pregnancy outside marriage and a way for parents to ease their burdens in a situation where feeding all family members has become difficult.
- In the Far North, adolescent girls report a wide variety of violence, including conflict-related violence, communal violence, and domestic violence<sup>50</sup>. They are confronted with sexual harassment and sexual violence as well as kidnappings and forced marriages perpetrated by armed groups. Adolescent survivors of sexual assault face stigma and are sometimes forced to marry their abusers<sup>51</sup>.
- In the North West and South West, girls face an increased risk of sexual violence. They are also more confronted with prostitution as a survival strategy<sup>52</sup>. While they know that such practices expose them to sexually transmitted diseases, they are unaware of the protection measures they could use.
- Displacement situations involve an increased workload for girls and teenage girls. Thus, beyond the work of collecting water, wood, cleaning, teenage girls sometimes have the responsibility to care for elderly members in their families<sup>53</sup>. Domestic chores, with the need to travel long distances in search of firewood and water, expose them to harassment and physical and sexual violence.
- School drop-out exposes children and adolescents, girls and boys, to increased risks of violence. It also means that they are more and more solicited to help support their families, working as servants or getting involved in agricultural work. In the Far North, as well as in the Northwest and South West, teenage girls separated from their parents are more likely to engage in small-scale subsistence activities as salespeople, tailors and domestic worker, allowing them to earn money and thus support themselves. Girls who work as maids are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault.
- In the South-West, some young boys who no longer go to school are using alcohol and drugs (Tramadol, etc.), which seriously affects their physical and mental health. Their enforced idleness also increases the risk of being recruited by armed groups.



### Gender-based violence:

- In Cameroon 43.2% of women in union are confronted with domestic violence. 39.8% and 14.5% respectively face emotional and sexual violence. Nationally, 20.1% of women were reported to have been forced to have sex for their first sexual relationship<sup>54</sup>. Overall, 56.4% of women in

<sup>47</sup> Amnesty International, *Une tournure tragique, Violence et atteintes aux droits humains dans les régions anglophones du Cameroun*, 2017

Le Monde, *Au Cameroun anglophone, le business du rapt*, 14 aout 2019

<sup>48</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*

<sup>49</sup> ONU Femmes Cameroun, *Rapport...*, p. 9. Early marriage affects primarily girls: In 2014, 22.3% of adolescent girls against 1.3% of adolescent boys 15 to 18 years were married or living with a partner (Annuaire Statistique du MINPROF, p.108)

<sup>50</sup> Plan international, *Ibid*

<sup>51</sup> Plan International, *Ibid*, p.7

<sup>52</sup> CARE & PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Ibid*

<sup>53</sup> Plan International, *Ibid*, p.42

<sup>54</sup> Annuaire Statistique du MINPROFF, p.55

union experienced at least one of these forms of violence<sup>55</sup>. The lack of legal criminalization of domestic violence and marital rape is a major gap in the protection of women's rights<sup>56</sup>.

- Gender-based violence has increased since the beginning of the crisis: A consultation in the South-West shows that 85% of respondents think that women and girls face violence, whether rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence, denial of resources or opportunity, psychological abuse, physical violence or early marriage<sup>57</sup>. Young women, aged 15 to 35, would be most at risk.
- In the Far North region, from February 2018 to June 2019, 97% of cases of GBV are reported by women, of which about 12% are sexual violence. In 84% of cases, the perpetrator is the intimate partner<sup>58</sup>.
- Sexual violence by armed groups or other men is a reality that is sometimes faced by boys and men. Thus, 11% of GBV cases reported in June were boys and men<sup>59</sup>. While domestic violence and sexual assault against women is reported very little to the police, these figures are virtually non-existent when it comes to violence against men<sup>60</sup>. Prosecuting the perpetrators of sexual violence against men is a real challenge since the definition in Cameroon's penal code does not provision for rape against the male population. Thus, the lawyers had to use the term "forced homosexuality" as an element to establish legal proceedings<sup>61</sup>.
- The lack of a formal referral mechanism to guide survivors greatly limits their access to appropriate holistic services. Health centers, while more accessible, do not offer the privacy and confidentiality that is recommended for the treatment of such cases. Information about cases of violence is also not stored safely. Lack of support to cover medical costs as well as the lack of complete PEP kits undermine the quality of care<sup>62</sup>. The accessibility to the forensic certificate remains limited because they are paying. In addition, survivors in some localities do not report abuse to the police for fear of arrest or fear that their case will not be handled in a way that places their own safety at the center.
- Beyond the absence and inadequacy of existing services, survivors face various obstacles preventing them from reporting abuse. Thus, the social representation of marriage, with the perception that a raped woman / girl has very little chance of finding a husband, being considered a "torn cloth", reduces them to silence. Also, the guilt of the rape suffered is sometimes placed on the victim who, by her actions or inadequate outfit, would have "provoked" the aggression. Sometimes survivors think they cannot be believed. Finally, the level of power often held by the perpetrators of such acts, with an ascendant over their victims, the threat of reprisals, the apprehension of being repudiated or the fear of being married to the executioner, are all obstacles to denunciation.
- Cases of breast ironing and female genital mutilation are noted, which already prevailed in some regions before the crisis<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> CARE & PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Ibid*, p. 3

<sup>56</sup> [http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Cameroon-UPR\\_EnglishWEB-FINAL-.pdf](http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Cameroon-UPR_EnglishWEB-FINAL-.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> IRC Cameroon Country, *Ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Rapports GBVIMS (février 2018 à Juin 2019)

<sup>59</sup> OCHA, *Cameroon...*, p.7. At the national level, 54.6% of women and 41.2% of men have been victims of physical violence since the age of 15 (Annuaire statistique du MINPROFF, p. 55)

<sup>60</sup> Annuaire Statistique du MINPROFF, p.32

<sup>61</sup> OCHA, *Cameroon...*, p.7

<sup>62</sup> IRC Cameroon Country Program, *Ibid*.

<sup>63</sup> ONU Femmes, *Profil...*, p.3