



GENDER CONFLICT

ANALYSIS IN CAMEROON



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM
CAMEROON

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Gender Conflict Analysis in Cameroon

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Authors : Cynthia Siri Wakuna, Michel Mathurin Ndongo Kitio

Editors: Sylvie Jacqueline Ndongmo, Guy Blaise Feugap

Layout: Marc Jiofack

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Cover photo: Former Boko Haram prisoner, living in Mora, Far North - Griote.



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ACRONYMS

ACAFEJ	Association Camerounaise des Femmes Juristes	LWF	Lutheran World Federation
ACDEV	Action for Development	MBOSCUDA	Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association
ADRA	Agence Adventiste d'Aide et de Développement	CPP	Cameroon People's Party
ALVF	Association to Fight Violence Against Women	CRM	Cameroon Renaissance Movement
APESS	Association for the Promotion of Livestock in the Sahel and Savannah	CRP	Cameroon Reformation Party
ASAD	Association d'Assistance au Développement	MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
ASSEJA	Association Enfants, Jeunes et Avenir	MINAT	Ministry of Territorial Administration
AU	African Union	MINEBASE	Ministry of Basic Education
AUPSC	African Union Peace and Security Council	MINESEC	Ministry of Secondary Education
CAPROD	Support Center for Self-Promotion for Sustainable Development	MINJUS	Ministry of Justice
CAR	Central African Republic	MINPROFF	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	MINREX	Ministry of External Relations
COHEB	Community Humanitarian Emergency Board	MND	Major National Dialogue
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration	NAP	National Action Plan
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo	NCPBM	National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
FEPEM	Association Femmes pour la Promotion du Leadership Moral	OHADA	Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	OP CRC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	PESTEL	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological, Legal
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	SNWOT	South West North West Women's Task Force
GCA	Gender Conflict Analysis	UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
GICAM	Inter-employer's Grouping of Cameroon	UN	United Nations
HEPROGES	Hommes Engagés pour la Promotion du Genre et l'Égalité entre les Sexes	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
IASC-NRC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons	UPC	Union des populations du Cameroun
IHL	International Humanitarian Law	WASH	Water, Sanitation, Hygiene
IMC	International Medical Corps	WFP	World Food Program
IRC	International Rescue Committee	WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service	XAF	Central African Francs
LUKMEF	Martin Luther King Jr Memorial Foundation		

FOREWORDS

Why do this? Why look at conflict from a gender perspective and seek to pick it apart, identify the fault lines, the root causes, the false narratives, tease out the position of various observers and then seek to make sense of it all? Why does gender matter and why do we need a conflict analysis from a gender perspective? The answer is as banal as the analysis is complicated: because it matters. It matters because if it is not done, then any hope of a process for peace which will guide communities out of crisis and become sustainable, is all but impossible. Think of how many peace processes have lasted long enough to enable children born at their signature to even finish their school years before regression is complete and violent conflict resumes.

Too often, analysis by external actors is top down and because of our patriarchal structures and approaches, are hard wired to look at conflict from a particular perspective: the actions and perspectives of men, a selected group of the powerful men. Women and pretty much everyone else are analysed as objects to whom the powerful men do things, or cause things to be done to. Victims find themselves with a collective identity defined by what was done to them, not people with agency who have rights and whose perspectives must be included, not least in devising ways of transitioning away from conflict. That can only happen if there is effective and consequential inclusion, particularly of women, and analysis of gendered origins and consequences of the violations.

Central to achieving an effective gender analysis of conflict is a feminist approach which insists that it is the political work of grassroots activists which is critical. It is their analysis, through discussion, interaction across political, ethnic, linguistic and across their multiple roles and identities which provides a better guide to achieving peace than an analysis which looks at the temporal aims of those who are the current wielders of power.

Cameroon is currently grappling with multiple complex crises, namely the Boko Haram attacks in the Far North region, an insurgency in the South West and North West regions, and the spillover of the conflict in the Central African Republic. Therefore, the Gender Conflict Analysis constitutes a timely resource for local, national, and international policy-makers. It should help them design gender-sensitive and responsive policies and programmes in conflict-affected areas. Equally important, the Gender Conflict Analysis will equip women leaders in Cameroon to engage meaningfully in peace processes. As

such, it is a much-needed contribution to the implementation not only of UNSCR 1325 (2000) but also to the broader 2030 Agenda, which seeks to foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

The process matters. We were challenged to look at existing modalities of enquiry by a narrative which did not fit with what activists and in particular the WILPF section in Cameroon were saying. To interrogate that narrative we worked with the Graduate Institute of Geneva to develop an anthropological approach so as to better understand the socio economic fault lines over time, political and symbolic, and how gender is and has been used to deepen and sustain the subordination of women. The application of that approach was developed and contextualised by the activists in Cameroon, particularly the WILPF section. They were supported by some of the 5 International Feminist Organisations which form the FIRE consortium and were joined by an amazing delegation of women from the Commonwealth mediators network who participated in the consultations and brought their own experience of conflict to the discussions. Two important lessons from feminist approaches: trust and establishing safe spaces so that people can speak truth. Doing so in the midst of conflict is challenging and yet it was done; a tribute to the integrity, empathy and decency of those who made this possible.

Few people want war and if they do it is never for honourable reasons and they need to create fear and vulnerability in people, play on gendered relations and manipulate in order to make war possible. The antidote is understanding, empathy and a steadfast refusal to be drawn into a narrative which excuses war and violence. In Cameroon the research shows that peace is both wanted and possible, it behoves the international community and the governance structures of the State to use this report as the basis of making the hopes for Peace a reality.

Madeleine Rees
WILPF Secretary General



GENDER CONFLICT

ANALYSIS IN CAMEROON



In October 2020, the International community celebrated the 20th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSCR 1325). In this landmark resolution, the Security Council acknowledged that:

“an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.”

However, in the past 20 years, the nature of conflicts changed drastically. The occurrence of inter-state conflicts significantly decreased while the number and intensity of violent conflicts involving non-state armed groups at the sub-national levels rose exponentially. UN data show that between 2005 and 2016, the number of Internally Displaced Persons increased more than fivefold, and the number of refugees nearly doubled over the same period¹.

For women and girls, little has changed. They continue to be disproportionately affected by sexual violence, which armed groups often use as a weapon of war. Furthermore, they continue to be excluded from peace negotiation tables. As actors, they seldom form parts of mediation teams or are included in negotiation talks. As a result, peace agreements do not reflect the issues that matter to women and girls. According to UN Women, from 1990 to 2018, less than 20 per cent of peace agreements included provisions addressing women or gender. And in 2019, none of the agreements reached in UN-led processes included provisions addressing women or gender.²

In this context, the Gender Conflict Analysis developed by WILPF Cameroon fills a critical gap: documenting women's and girls' understanding of

conflict dynamics to ensure that their perspectives shape paths to conflict transformation. This report captures the voices of Cameroonian women, the diverse roles they play — both positive and negative — in conflict situations as well as their aspirations.

The methodological approach underpinning the research strengthens the case for women and girls' involvement in peace processes in Cameroon. By adopting a country-wide coverage, the Gender Conflict Analysis highlights regional specificities, thus enabling tailored responses at the local level. Notably, it explores conflict dynamics and their gender dimensions in regions areas without violent conflicts, an essential element of conflict prevention work. The recommendations provided by respondents reveal the breadth of women's and girls' concerns. They reach beyond what would be considered “women's issues” to encompass local development priorities, access to humanitarian aid and basic services, or protection issues.

Allegra Baiocchi

United Nations Resident Coordinator for Cameroon



¹ UNHCR, Global Trends

² United Nations, Report of the Secretary General on Women, Peace and Security, S/2019/800, 9 October 2019



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May all those who have supported this work in any way find here the expression of our sincere thanks for the enthusiasm and commitment they have shown during this project.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, Cameroon has been plagued by several conflicts and socio-political unrest which have greatly affected the peace and security situation of the country. Some of these conflicts include: the Boko Haram attacks in the Far North region and insurgency in the South West and North West regions, the spill over of the conflict in the Central African Republic and in recent years, the “Anglophone Crisis” in the North West and South West Regions. In a bid to resolve these conflicts, interventions have failed to integrate a gendered perspective in the understanding of conflict, post-conflict, and peace processes, wherein strong dynamics such as power, root causes and the perspectives of women and girls are largely left out of the picture.

To this effect, this Report on “Gender Conflict Analysis in Cameroon examines the aforementioned aspects in the context of Cameroon through the incorporation of a gender perspective in conflict analysis. It further presents key findings and makes recommendations to ensure sustainable solutions for peace. The methodology of the research was comprised of a bottom-up approach, and a comprehensive feminist process led by WILPF Cameroon. This procedure ensured not just a diagnosis of the problems, but an analysis of what can be done to bring inclusive and sustainable change. The research period took place in 2019 and early 2020, mostly before the outbreak of the global pandemic in Cameroon. It is however worth mentioning that the realities of women living in conflict affected communities have been further aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report specifically reveals the lived experiences and grievances of women and girls from different parts of Cameroonian society on their own terms and seeks to create space to support women’s effort to prevent, mediate and participate in resolving conflicts, despite the existing challenges to women’s effective participation in peace and security processes in Cameroon.

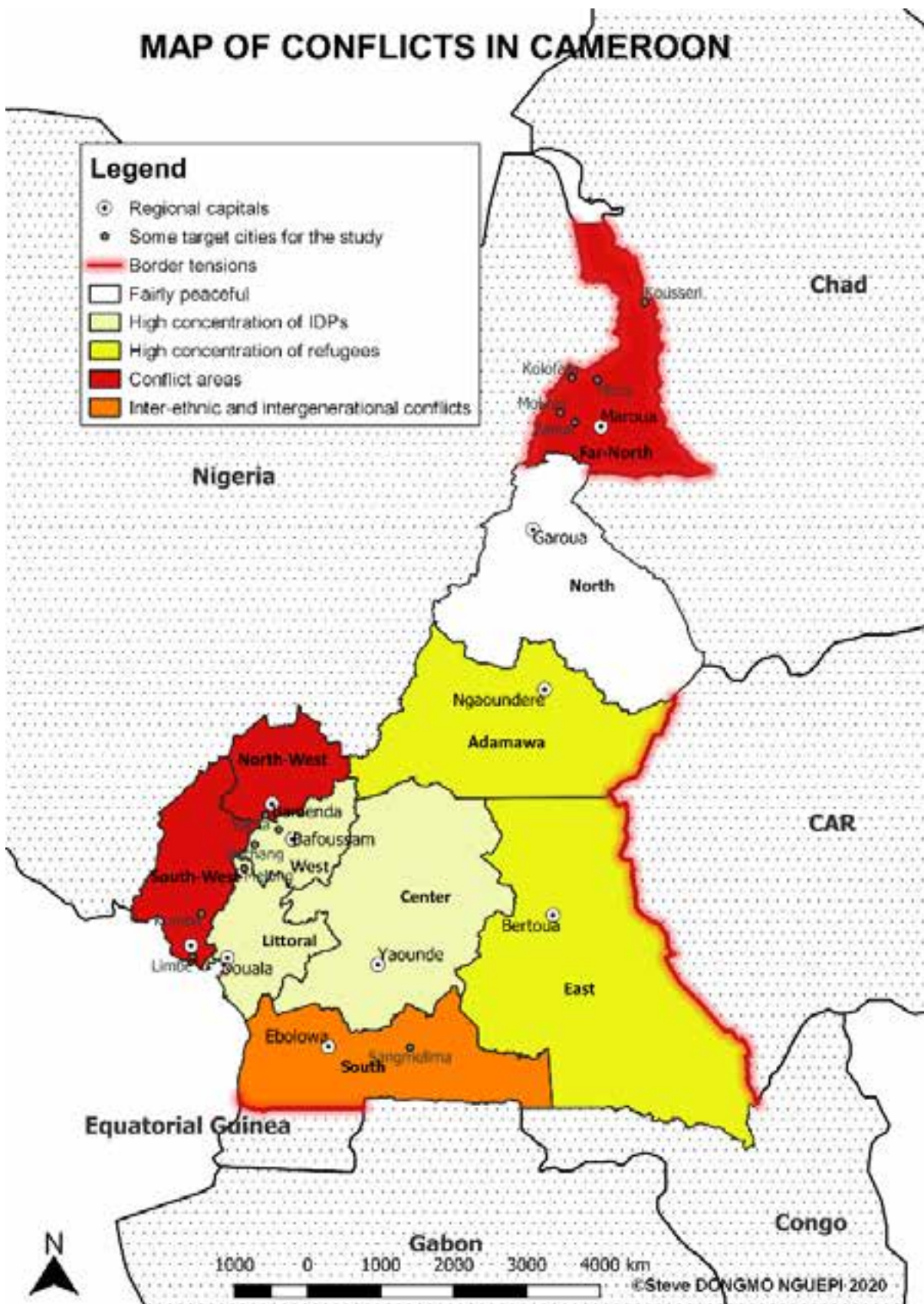
The report on “Gender Conflict Analysis in

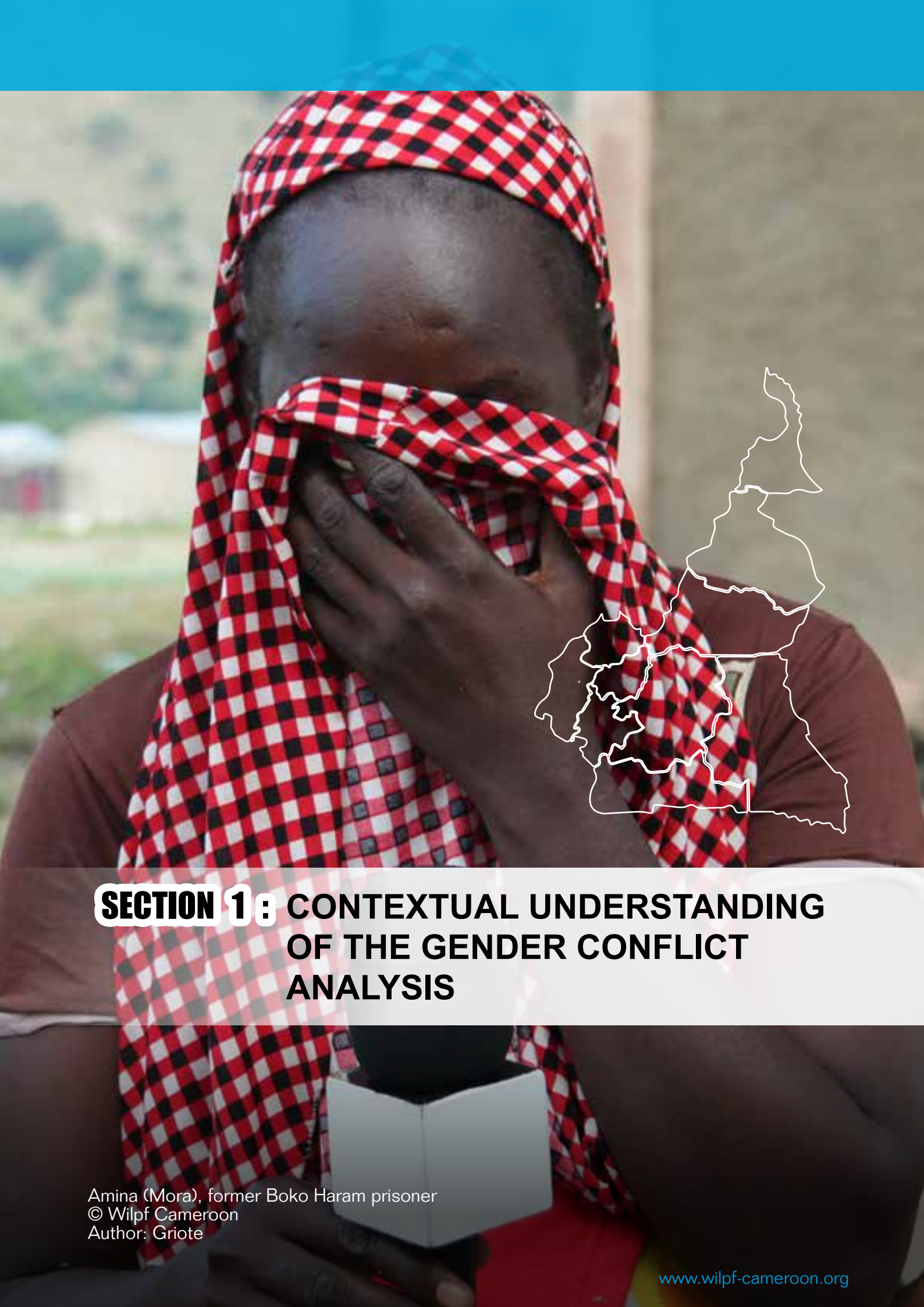
Cameroon” depicts the struggles of women across regions in organising and supporting each other, the barriers to their participation and the risks which they and their families face. It also highlights civil society engagement in conflict response. Key findings reveal that gender roles during crises are closely associated with constructed norms of masculinity and femininity, where men are regarded and raised as the stronger gender while women play domestic roles within communities. It further indicates that gender roles are altered by conflict as some women and girls take on different roles from head of households to combatants or leading armed groups. Across all regions of Cameroon, the prevalence of gender-based violence emerged. There exist normative ideas of masculinity that manhood equals to fighting and providing for the family have also been significant factors in the recruitment of boys and men into armed groups. Various forms of abuse of power by decision makers were documented and concerns were also raised about the very significant lack of trust at multiple levels.

The impact of the on-going armed conflict in the South West and North West raise specific challenges, which must be addressed with gender responsiveness. Trauma, in various forms, and the prevention of re-traumatization and access to psychosocial support for those affected especially IDPs remains a significant challenge which requires resourcing and commitment. There was a sense of urgency and demand from Cameroonians of all regions for more accountability of the Government and an end to human rights abuses by all actors.

The findings from regional consultations with women are summarised into regional clusters outcome analyses: Far North and North regions (Section 2), Adamawa and East regions (Section 3), North-West and South-West regions (Section 4), Centre, Littoral and West regions (Section 5), and South region (Section 6). Common and emerging trends are illustrated in Section 7. Section 8 formulates recommendations to ensure gender-responsive measures to address conflict and to achieve peace.

MAP OF CONFLICTS IN CAMEROON





SECTION 1 : CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE GENDER CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Amina (Mora), former Boko Haram prisoner
© Wilpf Cameroon
Author: Griote

1.1. Background

In recent decades, Cameroon has witnessed growing political and social instability, fuelled by multiple crises: the socio-political crisis shaking the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon (North West and South West), the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North, the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR), electoral violence and post-election disputes following the 2018 presidential election, the rise of hate speech in the political discourse, the radicalisation of young people, the growing spirit of rebellion and resistance to state violence. It is important to note that the periods under the German, French and British colonial rules, have been significant in the shaping the current conflicts in Cameroon. The dichotomous stratification of regions in Cameroon was introduced as a result of colonial and postcolonial policies in which the population was categorized and institutionalised into distinct groups. Since independence in 1960, this division as a colonial legacy has been pursued predominantly by elites in mobilising groups around identity.

There is need for a conceptual rethink of the manner in which the analysis of these conflicts is approached as interventions so far have failed to bring sustainable solutions. At present, there has been a failure to conduct effective gendered conflict analysis. This means that the broader understanding of what is happening in the country is absent, as actions and recommendations are not addressing the full picture. Furthermore, considering the fact that women play an active role in conflict prevention and the different gendered impact of the conflict situations, it was timely to consult women and women-led civil society organisations (CSOs) as part of the Gender Conflict Analysis (GCA). Given that most of the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue and other peace initiatives such as Cameroon's National Action Plan on resolution 1325 are not effectively implemented, this enormously reduces the impact that they could have in feeding the peace processes, accountability mechanisms, transitional justice, and post-conflict transformation.

1.2. Country context

The current country context analysis built from a PESTEL framework, which is used to arrive at a macro picture of the strategic factors that impact the conflict settings in Cameroon. This entails an examination of the political, economic, social, technological and legal context of the country at the time of the study.

1.2.1. Political

As mentioned earlier, Cameroon is characterized by growing political and social instability, fuelled by increasing and multiple conflicts. The socio-political crisis shaking the two English-speaking regions started with social upheavals against a backdrop of demands and grievances from English-speaking lawyers and teachers protesting marginalisation. For years, they had been asking the central government to find institutional and practical solutions against marginalisation including the translation of official documents and laws in English. The government violently repressed these protests; what started as protests against structural discrimination escalated into violence in 2017 and into a full-scale armed conflict between armed separatist forces and government military forces in the North-West and the South-West regions.

“Not a week goes by without houses being burned down, people kidnapped or killed. Fear has taken over this territory,” said Archbishop Samuel Kleda of Douala, the then president of the Cameroon bishops' conference, in a letter addressed to Cameroonian people on 16 May 2018, “Let us stop all forms of violence and let us stop killing each other.” “Let us save our country from an unfounded and useless civil war.”

Electoral violence and post-election disputes following the 2018 presidential election, which was characterized by prohibition of protests, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment have added to the already delicate situation and fuelled latent conflicts such as the rise of hatred among supporters of opposing political parties. The presidential elections of 7 October 2018 was indeed marked by a rise in hate speech and the rhetoric of tribalism on social and traditional media. This, coupled with post-election protests and demonstrations in Douala, Bafoussam and Yaoundé, and even among the diaspora, amplified the already negative climate of insecurity.

In this context, the quest to find long lasting solutions has not been exclusive rather than inclusive, failing to take women's voices into account voices, which depicts structural issues and violence which may otherwise remain unnoticed. Although they represent the majority of the population of the country, women and girls are still to a large extent excluded from formal peace and security processes. Looking at the government and other key institutions in peace and security issues, the percentage of women is quite low:

- 61 women out of 180 parliamentarians;
- 04 women out of 15 members in the Commission on Bilingualism and

- Multiculturalism;
- The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration committee, created in 2017 to address demobilisation of combatants in the Boko Haram and South West/North West crisis, is made up of 10 ministries and a few other organs. However, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family is not part of the committee despite the Ministry's role in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which could help in addressing the gendered dimensions of these conflicts.
- 600 delegates took part in the Major National Dialogue of September 2019. Even if the figures are still speculative as to the number of women present, it is clear that the presence of men was much higher than that of women. In high-level positions, only 01 woman headed a commission on 14 women of the offices of the commissions. Also, out of the 120 people empowered in the facilitation of the national dialogue either as chairpersons, vice-chairs, rapporteurs or resource persons, there were only 14 women (a participation percentage of 16.8%).

1.2.2. Economic and social

Since 2016, the security situation has worsened with the eruption of the crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon adding to the already existing armed conflicts, namely the Boko Haram insurgency and tensions between refugee groups and local inhabitants from the Central African Republic and local inhabitants. Violence has been at a peak since 2018, with government forces conducting large-scale security operations and separatists launching several attacks. Clashes have become recurrent between the state armed forces and non-state armed groups.

The figures below represent the occurrence of violence and damages caused by the crisis :

According to OCHA, in April 2020, there were approximately 976 773 IDPs in Cameroon and 354 328 returnees. As at November 2019, 90% of public primary schools and 77% of public secondary schools remained closed or ceased to operate in the North West and South West. The head of basic education for the North-West said school attendance had gone down from 422,000 in 2017 to 5,500 children in early 2020.

Also according to OCHA the ongoing conflict continues to negatively impact access to basic services such as education and health. Consequently, 80% of health and education services in the North West and South West regions are non-functioning. Out of 18 health districts in the North-West and South-West regions, 16 are considered unsafe for health personnel. The Decree N°2019/3179/PM of 2 September 2019 granted the status of economic disaster areas to the Far-North, North-West and South-West Regions as a clear testimony of this disastrous situation.

It is estimated that companies that were active in logging in the South-West Region show a shortfall of more than 5.5 billion XAF (about 9 million USD) per year since 2017. The impact in terms of tax revenue is more than 400 million XAF (about 672 000 USD) in forest royalties, logging tax, withholding tax on rent, personal income taxes, corporate taxes and other employer taxes.

As of March 2019,³ the data collected from companies and compiled by GICAM gives an idea of the financial impact of the crisis on businesses. In terms of asset losses, destruction, looting and theft have already cost nearly 40 billion XAF (about 67 million USD), half of which represents the losses of agro-industrial companies Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), PAMOL, CTE, NDAWARA Tea Estate, Plantation HP). Due to the nature of their activities which extend over hectares, they find themselves almost helpless in the face of attacks and are unable to safeguard their assets, especially plant material. The energy transport and distribution infrastructure have also been particularly affected. Alongside businesses, public buildings, road infrastructures, houses and entire villages have been destroyed as a result of the conflicts, and whether in the Far-North, South-West or North- West, these are the most visible signs that show the hideous face of war.

The armed conflict is also leading to violations of women's economic and social rights. In the English-Speaking regions, for example, it is estimated that more than 80% of women are unable to perform the agricultural activities that they usually carry out, this situation impacting livelihoods and national productivity.⁴ During a Parliamentary session in 2018, a parliamentarian from the North West [region called the government's attention to the risk of famine in the region](#) because

3

4 Guy Blaise Feugap (2019): "Gender and armed violence: a look at the situation in Cameroon" <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/cameroon-english.pdf>

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2018-march-2019/crisis-worsens-cameroon>

of the extent to which violence had impacted farming. There are two aspects of this: first, the increased armed violence has caused women to flee. At the same time, women are being prevented from carrying out their work by the fighters. Those who try to “disobey the order” and carry out activities anyway are often kidnapped, tortured and, sometimes, killed.

1.2.3 Legal

1.2.3.1. Relevant international and regional instruments on women’s rights and conflict

Cameroon has ratified several international human rights treaties, and has, thus, assumed obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the rights, including in relation to women’s rights, set out in those treaties. These obligations continued to apply even in times of armed conflict. For instance, Cameroon is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of children in armed conflict.⁵ Cameroon is also bound by regional human rights instruments including by: the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Union (AU) Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

Cameroon is also bound by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts.

Cameroon has also undertaken, both at the international and regional levels, numerous political commitments regarding women’s rights under the Beijing Platform for Action⁶

and the Dakar Platform for Action,⁷ the Solemn Declaration of Heads of State and Government on Gender Equality in Africa, the AU Gender Policy of 2009, the African Women’s Decade 2010-2020, the AU Declaration Dedicating 2015 as the Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063, as well as under the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent related resolutions.

1.2.3.2. National laws and policies

The Preamble of the Constitution (1996) of Cameroon includes provisions that enshrine gender equality as well as rights of children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. It states: “the Nation shall protect and promote the family which is the natural foundation of human society. It shall protect women, the young, the elderly and the disabled (...). The State shall guarantee all citizens of either sex the rights and freedoms set forth in the Preamble of the Constitution.”

Cameroon has also made some progress in the protection of women’s and children’s rights, especially for the protection of girls. There have been several legislative advances towards the protection of women’s and children’s rights through reforms contained in various codes⁸ and several other decrees and policies in force in the country to this end. However, the effective implementation of such laws in practice and access to justice for women remain elusive and various laws, including customary laws, are still discriminatory against women.⁹

The Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) was created following the decree N°2004/320 of 8 December 2004. For several years now, through MINPROFF, actions have been carried out aimed at implementing measures for the promotion and welfare of women and children. One such action is the Multisectoral Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Gender Policy (2016-2020) adopted on 13 December 2016.

The security context has helped to drive actions towards the localization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda with the adoption of the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) in 2017. The adoption of the NAP is a positive step; however, it has not been followed by a proper implementation

5 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=30&Lang=EN

6 <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>

7 <https://www.oursplatform.org/resource/economic-commission-africa-dakar-platform-action/>

8 Trade Code, Labour Code, Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code

9 See for example WILPF Cameroon’s report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Cameroon-CESCR_EN.pdf

in order to produce concrete results including the adoption of the family code.

1.2.3.3 Challenges in implementation

The recourse to justice through law for vulnerable populations, including for women in conflict settings, remains a challenge in Cameroon. The most recurrent obstacles mentioned by the women interviewed is the fact that women are ignorant about their rights and the existing laws protecting them. Many of them do not understand legal procedures, legal texts, or the cost of court procedures. In addition to the aforementioned challenge, gender roles have made women primarily responsible for providing and caring for their families which makes them more concerned about existential needs; they have, thus, built up a negative resilience with regard to their access to justice. So national laws do not yet contribute to the well-being of women, worse still those affected by conflict.

In addition, international and regional human rights mechanisms have expressed concerns about the escalating conflict in the English-speaking regions and have made recommendations to the government of Cameroon for the root causes of the conflict to be addressed as a sustainable path to the restoration of peace in these regions. For example, in 2019 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended Cameroon to:

- “Ensure the effective implementation of the humanitarian assistance plans that have been adopted and of the 2018–2020 national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 and related resolutions on women and peace and security by, inter alia, establishing effective follow-up mechanisms that provide for the participation of the population groups

concerned, including women, and by allocating sufficient financial, human and technical resources for their implementation;

- Make every effort to achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions of the country.”¹⁰

The Committee also recommended that Cameroon to “place priority on putting an end to the persistent inequality between men and women” and called on it to:

- “Take measures to combat gender stereotypes and change traditional attitudes that interfere with women’s enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights, including their access to land;
- Repeal all legal provisions, including in the Civil Code, that discriminate against women or bar women from certain types of jobs, and ensure equality between men and women in the application of customary law, as well as in statutory law;
- Adopt all necessary measures, including temporary special measures, to ensure that women have equal access to all spheres of political and public life.”¹¹

During its review by the Universal Periodic Review in 2017, another UN human rights mechanism, many States called on Cameroon to make further efforts to ensure an inclusive peace process to find durable solutions to the violence in the South West and North West regions.¹²

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has also repeatedly called on Cameroon to “tackle the root causes and underlying grievances of significant elements of the population, who have been feeling excluded,”¹³ as well as for full accountability for human rights

¹⁰ Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cameroon, E/C.12/CMR/CO/4, 25 March 2019, paragraph 5 (c and d), available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2fCMR%2fCO%2f4&Lang=en

¹¹ Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cameroon, E/C.12/CMR/CO/4, 25 March 2019, paragraph 28 (a, b and c), available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2fCMR%2fCO%2f4&Lang=en

¹² A/HRC/39/15, 121.63 Observe the right of its citizens to express their views in dealing with the problems of the English-speaking provinces (Czechia); 121.66 Redouble efforts for the full and effective implementation of the official bilingual policy, and ensure that the English-speaking minority is not subject to inequality in access to public services, the administration of justice, and freedom of speech (Republic of Korea); 121.64 Initiate a multi-stakeholder dialogue at the political level with the various stakeholders in the English-speaking communities in order to identify appropriate measures to respond adequately to the violence affecting the Southwest and Northwest areas of the country (Austria); 121.65 Expressly engage in a sustained dialogue with the representatives of the English-speaking community on the crisis in the North-west and South-west regions of the country to reach a consensual solution that upholds human rights (Canada); 121.61 Ensure the effective implementation of the official bilingualism policy in consultation with all stakeholders, in order to assure equal treatment to the English-speaking minority and to eliminate marginalization in all its forms (Haiti); 121.62 Redouble its efforts to effectively implement its bilingualism policy in order to ensure that the English-speaking population does not suffer from discrimination in employment, education or access to legal services (Honduras).

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25113&LangID=E>; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24565&LangID=E>

abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including by security forces.¹⁴ The 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee — who led a visit to Cameroon of the African Women Leaders Network in April 2019 — also expressed concerns over the worsening security situation in the English-speaking regions and stated that Cameroon would descend into chaos if there are no talks to bring peace to the separatist regions.¹⁵

In May 2018, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a resolution¹⁶ with which, *inter alia*, condemned the various human rights violations committed in the country since October 2016 and “decided to undertake a general human rights promotion mission to the Republic of Cameroon, in collaboration with the government authorities.”¹⁷ The Commission also called “upon all the parties to engage in dialogue towards saving lives and restoring calm, security and peace as soon as possible.”¹⁸ In November 2019, the Chairperson of the Commission transmitted a Letter of Concern to Cameroon following up on the discussions during the 65th Ordinary Session of the Commission on the human rights issues arising from the violent crisis affecting the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country. The Chairperson reiterated the Commission's request for Cameroon to grant authorization for the Commission to accompany Cameroon in the search for peace and for dealing with the human rights violations by undertaking a visit to the country.¹⁹

1.3. Key actors in the resolution of conflicts in Cameroon

It is apparent from this research that due to the complexity of the conflicts, different actors have taken different views and different approaches in the search for long-lasting solutions. There have been notable contributions to alleviate harm and call for peace.

Several CSOs have mobilised and campaigned for an end to the crisis. For instance, the South-West, North-West Women Task Force (SNWOT)²⁰ demanded a ceasefire and meaningful participation to find sustainable peace to the violent conflict. The Platform “Cameroon Women for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education” under the leadership of WILPF Cameroon has set up an early warning mechanism to prevent violence: the initiative helped to organize, among other things, community and consultative meetings with women and other civil society organizations; community campaigns to encourage map out issues and actors for nonviolence and peace initiatives; training of youth and women on the use of social media to promote peace and non violence.²¹

In the Far North, CSOs such as the Association to Fight Violence Against Women (ALVF) have worked, through training and multifaceted support, alongside women and girls living in poverty and in vulnerable situation. Women's groups in the North-West and South-West organized events such as mourning days to call for peace.

At a time when Boko Haram was being regarded as a Muslim movement, traditional and religious leaders in the Far-North as well as the rest of the country eased tensions by organizing prayers and awareness-raising ceremonies for peace. On those occasions, they explained to people that Islam is a religion of peace and as such cannot

14 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24565&LangID=E>

15 <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroonian-women-call-government-stop-anglophone-separatist-fighting>

16 With this resolution, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:

1. Condemns the various human rights violations committed in the country since October 2016;
2. Condemns the continuous repression against human rights defenders;
3. Requests that impartial and independent investigations be conducted towards identifying the perpetrators of violations and bringing them to justice;
4. Calls upon the various parties to prioritise national harmony and unity, and to refrain from any action that may undermine the main pillars of the Cameroonian society;
5. Calls upon all the parties to engage in dialogue towards saving lives and restoring calm, security and peace as soon as possible;
6. Decides to undertake a general human rights promotion mission to the Republic of Cameroon, in collaboration with the government authorities.”

Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Cameroon - ACHPR/Res. 395 (LXII), <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=404>

17 Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Cameroon - ACHPR/Res. 395 (LXII) 2018 , <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=404>

18 Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Cameroon - ACHPR/Res. 395 (LXII) 2018 , <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=404>

19 <https://www.achpr.org/pressrelease/detail?id=457>

20 <https://snwot.org>

21 See WILPF Cameroon's report on election monitoring <http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Final-report-2018-election.pdf>

encourage massacres; those messages greatly contributed to pacification among the various communities in the country and to preventing stigmatisation and interfaith conflicts, particularly between Christians and Muslims.

Among the actions that have contributed to the search for solutions are proposals made by diplomatic missions in Yaoundé, several of which²² called for inclusive dialogues as a way out of the crisis in the North-West and South-West.²³ They also have called for actions at international level.²⁴ Some civil society organizations, NGOs and the media have contributed in various ways, including through investigation, awareness-raising, information and public advocacy.

The President of the Republic initiated a dialogue with lawyers and teachers at the start of crisis; created institutions such as the National Commission on Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR); instituted a special plan to assist IDPs and victims of abuses in the North-West and South-West Regions, order the release of some of the people detained in relation to the crisis and post-electoral demonstrations. He also initiated the Major National Dialogue chaired by the Prime Minister.

Political parties have made many calls to put an end to different crises. Some of them have elaborated a peace and security agenda as part of their plan of action. Some female political leaders have rallied women from different backgrounds for a protest march in solidarity with women facing the challenges of the crisis in the affected regions. This march was their way of commemorating International Women's Day. During this protest, women were dressed in black and held peace plants reflecting the pain which women are feeling from the loss of their loved ones and calling for peace. Other parties carried out a nationwide collection of funds, material and food items in favour of IDPs and survivors of the different crises.

1.4. Gender Conflict Analysis Rationale

While over the past two decades there has been an increasing recognition that, understanding the nature of conflict is effective in designing effect peacebuilding responses, it is necessary to think about power and gender relations as too often such dimensions are neglected from conflict analysis and conflict assessments.

Therefore, the GCA report draws on a comprehensive gender perspective, setting out the available gender-differentiated data in conflict analysis, deepening as such our understanding of the root causes, the strategies and approaches to conflict prevention in the current conflicts in Cameroon. Gender analysis reveals that conflicts are gendered, and also explores to what extent gender roles and experiences are impacted by conflicts, as well as how the roles of women and men affect the ways conflicts play out. By paying attention to structures and voices that are left unseen and unheard during and after periods of conflict, this report examines the actual impact of cross-cutting conflict and gender issues across numerous historical, political and economic junctures.

This analysis specifically reveals the lived experiences and grievances of women and girls from different groups in the Cameroonian society on their own terms and seeks to create space to support women's efforts to prevent, mediate and participate in resolving conflicts, despite the large obstacles remaining for women's effective participation in peace and security processes. The GCA serves as a baseline on gendered power dynamics - including gender-sensitive data- both in real time and in the aftermath of conflicts in Cameroon for developing appropriate evidence-based responses and policies from national and international actors.

22

23 See, for example, European Union: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/cameroon/67228/node/67228_nl; France <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/cameroon/news/article/cameroon-launch-of-a-major-national-dialogue-10-09-2019?xtor=RSS-1>

24 See statement to the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council delivered by the UK on behalf of 38 countries:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/human-rights-council-40-cameroon>

<https://actucameroun.com/2019/10/17/lambassadeur-des-etats-unis-exige-a-paul-biya-un-nouveau-dialogue-national/>

<https://cm.ambafrance.org/Cameroun-Lancement-d-un-grand-dialogue-national-10-septembre-2019>

EU: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/cameroon/67228/node/67228_nl ; AU: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20190911/communique-du-president-de-la-commission-de-lunion-africaine-sur-la-situation>

France : <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/cameroon/news/article/cameroon-launch-of-a-major-national-dialogue-10-09-2019?xtor=RSS-1>

1.5. Gender Conflict Analysis Methodology

1.5.1. Efficient coordination and follow up

Part of the methodology included analysing the current security context through a PESTEL framework, that is describing the political, economic, social, technological and legal context of Cameroon at the time of the study. The methodology also considers gender-related elements of investigation, specifically on sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence. This was to ensure that the right questions were asked to the right people, investigated, and that the results are scrutinized so as to expose how power structures vis-à-vis the political economy is operating and its impact on peace. By doing so a diagnostic which is closer to the reality of people's lives can be achieved.

1.5.2. Gender-based approach

WILPF has undertaken a comprehensive approach to fact finding and inquiry so as to provide, not just a diagnosis of the problems, but an analysis of what can be done to bring change; to support, or indeed, help create, a process towards peace which can be inclusive and sustainable.

First, WILPF Cameroon conducted background research on the current situation, which identifies some of the most pressing causes of conflict and has been updated to include the increased levels of violence, including sexual violence. Secondly, UN Women supported a visit of the African Women Leaders Network led by Leymah Gbowee to meet with politicians and decision makers from 13 to the 18 April 2019. WILPF Cameroon facilitated meetings with CSO representatives. Building on the knowledge generated, WILPF Cameroon organized a follow-up mission of inquiry led by a team of three gender experts who conducted the participatory research to better understand the current fault lines driving conflict and causing general instability.

The research was based on interviews, data collecting and analysis of testimonies from victims of conflict and actors on the ground, from the most marginalized social and ethnic groups to the political and economic elites working in the field. The approach taken was participatory and deliberately gender-sensitive, both as concerned researchers and people consulted. It is a holistic gender lens that proactively seeks to capture continuity and change at an ethnographic level at conflict sites detailing the lived and everyday experience.

1.5.3. Types of conflict and research areas

While there are plethoras of ways in which conflict can be defined, a starting point of WILPF Cameroon has been to consider conflict in the wider context of peace building and conflict prevention. In the context of the UN Charter and of international humanitarian law, international peace and security refers to the absence of war and armed conflict and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is traditionally linked to state or national security, which refers to the requirement to protect the state through the use of economic, military and political power, and the exercise of diplomacy. This report, however, is grounded in a broader understanding of security and conflict, recognizing that insecurity and conflict can occur at multiple levels (household, community, state, or transnational) and across multiple dimensions, including within economic, food, health, community, environmental, personal and political spheres. This approach focuses on a people-centered concept of human security and seeks to acknowledge the differentiated gendered impacts of conflict and insecurity, as well as their impacts on various groups.

The study was initially programed to be executed in four regions: two from the conflict affected regions, and two from neighbouring cities in order to analyse the gender dynamics of conflicts in a holistic manner. After the first assessment meeting with partners and members of the platform Cameroon Women for Peaceful Elections, it appeared that all regions are experiencing several conflict dynamics and insecurity, which needed to be specifically analysed. The participants came from different regions, where they were experiencing crises, either because of the conflicts in the three regions mostly affected by armed conflicts, i.e. Far North, North West and South West, or because of local realities that, from the partners' point of view, also merited the attention of the researchers. Participants felt that the analysis of the gender dimension in conflicts was a unique opportunity to explore all the various sources of conflicts and tensions (whether apparent or overt) in order to develop holistic and nationwide responses. They argued that a focus only on conflict-affected regions would risk neglecting the situation and needs of the other parts of the country; the lack of attention to such needs can be in itself a source of tension between government and local communities and sometimes between communities as they will feel frustrated and neglected. It therefore seemed appropriate to allow Cameroonians from all regions to express themselves. In response to that, we strengthened the capacity of 30 data collectors — 20 of whom were women — on

techniques of sourcing primary and secondary data and the role of the Sphere protection principles in the Humanitarian setting.

1.5.4. Bottom-up data collection

Data was collected by the field team of trained data collectors, who fed the data back to the research team using the investigation tools in the form of a semi-structured interview guide and focus group questionnaires; and in the form of an interview guide for IDPs and other survivors of conflict. Data collection and data management was done under very strict rules of confidentiality and safeguarding in order to avoid any harm to participants. Data collectors were trained on how to conduct interviews, consultation meetings and Focus Groups Discussions in a very sensitive and empathic way. Prevention of re-traumatization and access to psychosocial support in case any of the participants would have needed further support was discussed and identified prior to meetings.

For security and neutrality reasons and in order to remain gender conscious, interviews with survivors were conducted in closed places, with the consent of the persons concerned. The most requested venues were churches, schools, civil society organizations headquarters, hotels, traditional chiefdoms and private homes for those who expressed an interest. Interviews with representatives of the administrations took place in their respective offices.

The working methodology took into account the analysis of relevant testimonies and documents aimed at identifying the types of conflicts, the actors involved and the role of women, the root causes, existing prevention mechanisms, humanitarian intervention, impact and consequences.

The study was participatory and helped gather qualitative and limited quantitative data from relevant sectorial stakeholders working across 10 regions in Cameroon. The peculiarity of the study is attributed to the story segment which reveals true and first hand testimonies from victims and survivors of the armed conflict and gender-based violence as well as from witnesses, ex combatants, militaries. In total, 1505 individuals were reached out to in the course of the research, 1073 of whom were women and 432 men.

The study gathered both primary and secondary data from the following sources with well-defined respondents as per category:

- Key Informant Interviews with local civil society actors: 80 civil society actors across the 10 regions;
- Focus Group discussions (FGDs)/ community meetings: 40 FGDs and

community meetings with a total of 754 participants;

- Confidential interviews with conflict/GBV survivors and witnesses: 371 interviews including 284 with women conflict/GBV survivors and witnesses across the country, most from the West, North-West, Littoral and Far North regions;
- Assessment workshops: 13 assessment workshops with a total of 243 participants (103 men and 140 women) in the Centre, Littoral, South West, North West and Far North regions;
- Desk review of existing narratives/reports: Gather facts/data from existing reports regarding ongoing conflicts and GBV issues in Cameroon;
- Meetings with 57 administrative authorities, traditional and religious leaders: advocacy meetings were held to discuss with administrative authorities, traditional and religious leaders to collect their actions namely in prevention and intervention;
- A meeting and interviews with 12 UN agencies representatives to discuss their roles, actions, views and perspectives on the gender conflict analysis;
- Interviews with eight Solidarity mission delegates. After their stay in Cameroon, including in some conflict-affected areas, the members of the mission were also interviewed to gather their perceptions of the reality on the field;
- Interviews with 6 members of the Cameroonian diaspora who are particularly active both virtually on social media and in the conflict itself (though funding and mobilisation). These members were key administrators of popular Facebook groups which had followers ranging in number from 2,000 to 35,000.

A Call centre with a toll-free number 8243 for data collection on electoral violence was set up as an early-warning mechanism to prevent violence during the electoral period. It is being operationalized as a Gender-Based Violence Observatory to undertake systematic monitoring and strategic advocacy regarding gender-based violence issues in conflict affected communities in the country. During the recent municipal and legislative election, 90 users of the toll-free number 8243 called to express their concerns or report electoral violence.

1.5.5. Regional Cluster Perception of Conflict Dynamics

The study used regional levels of analysis with the aim of providing a better insight into stakeholders' perceptions of conflict. The regions were mapped as follows:

1. Cluster 1: Far-North and North regions
2. Cluster 2: Adamawa and East regions
3. Cluster 3: North-West and South-West regions
4. Cluster 4: South region
5. Cluster 5: Centre, Littoral and West regions

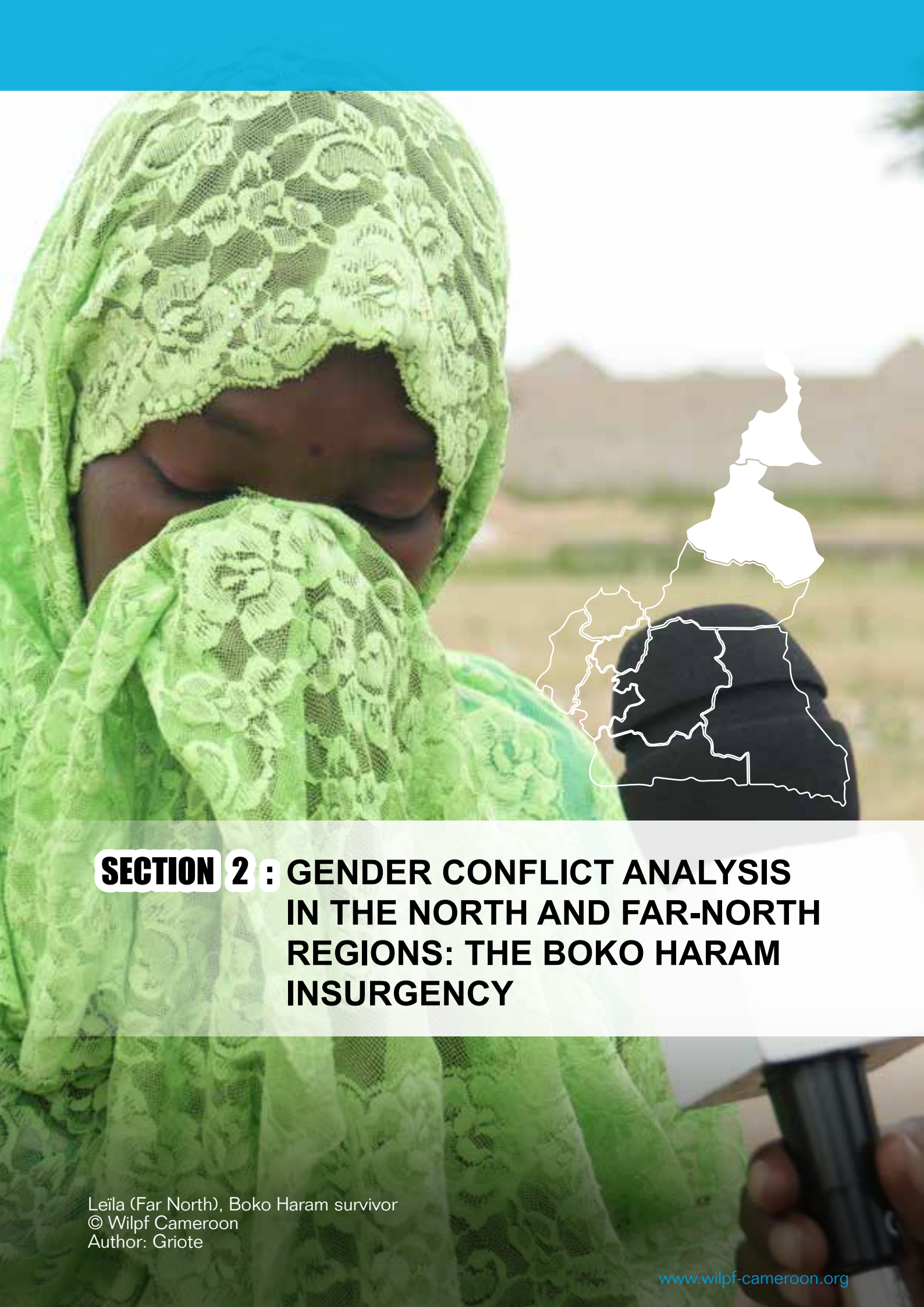
1.5.6. Validation Workshop and Follow Up On Recommendations

On 4 March 2020, the GCA Summary Report was publicly presented to over 50 representatives of Ministries, civil society organisations, media and United Nations specialised agencies attending the workshop. This was an opportunity to involve relevant stakeholders in the drafting of the Gender Conflict Analysis, discuss and provide recommendations to mainstream gender into national planning, development policies, and programs. Through this process, participants shared their opinions on the quality of the work presented. The participatory workshop gave key stakeholders an opportunity to review the draft report and foster multi-stakeholder cooperation and insight on conflict resolution, peace building, and humanitarian assistance from a gender perspective.

During the plenary discussion, some participants who happened to be representatives of the government contested the findings of the Gender Conflict Analysis, with regards to the testimonies survivors of sexual violence, wherein the validity of the testimonies as effective data was questioned. WILPF expressed strong concerns about minimising the testimonies of witnesses and victims. The team further urged the government to commit to addressing issues of gender-based violence, investigate the cases in conflict-affected regions given the dearth of national data on sexual offenses and gender-based violence, and implement policies and strategies for prevention.

The exchange session was highly interactive with all stakeholders making significant contributions towards improving on the GCA report in terms of content. The discussions present at the workshop, which resulted in a range of constructive comments, questions and suggestions. Additional recommendations were made to provide better

responses to conflicts and survivors' concerns. Participants also requested additional time to better contribute to the report; to this effect, a questionnaire was sent to them to collect further information. The suggested revision and comments have been taken into consideration and incorporated into the final version of the report as much as possible.



SECTION 2 : GENDER CONFLICT ANALYSIS IN THE NORTH AND FAR-NORTH REGIONS: THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

Leïla (Far North), Boko Haram survivor
© Wilpf Cameroon
Author: Griote

2.1. CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Since the 2010s, the Boko Haram insurgency has become progressively the principal form of conflict in the North and the Far North region of Cameroon, and a major regional threat operating in neighbouring Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. Targeting primarily civilians, Boko Haram has resorted to different forms of warfare from shootings, massive destruction of property, abduction, to suicide bombings in public spaces. After the declaration of war on Boko Haram in 2014, the Cameroonian government has deployed different military operations in its 'counter-insurgency' efforts in the Far North, North Region, as well as in the Lake Chad region.

The increase of Boko Haram attacks and its concomitant violence have engendered significant consequences in the North and Far North of Cameroon, especially in the Logone and Chari, Mayo-Sava, and Mayo-Tsanaga divisions. According to the different interviews and focus groups conducted by WILPF Cameroon in the region, the escalation of violence has resulted in human loss, the perpetuation of gender-based violence, the large influx of IDPs in the trans-border region between Cameroon and Nigeria, the proliferation of corridors for the illicit transit and sale of weapons on informal markets, and an economic collapse. Boko Haram insurgency, cross-border conflicts and organised crime turn Cameroon into fertile ground for the massive circulation of the weapons, which constitutes a permanent threat against peace²⁵, as shown in a previous study conducted by WILPF Cameroon²⁶ on the proliferation of weapons as a key factor of insecurity and armed conflict in the country.

As of early 2020, approximately 300,000 IDPs and 140,000 refugees were living in and around urban centres in host communities in the Far North region²⁷ with very limited resources to meet their daily subsistence needs; a vast majority have never received any form of livelihood support from the government.²⁸ Since the beginning of the insurgency, humanitarian actors have observed a rise in the exclusion of IDPs and refugees by the host population. Due to the significant suspicion of being Boko Haram supporters and to the fear of possible attacks in the host community, most IDPs face significant forms of stigmatisation,

discrimination, and attacks, which severely limit their economic opportunities and place them in a more precarious situation. This permanent distrust is also shared by IDPs and refugees among themselves and towards the host community.

For instance, according to IDPs interviewed in Mora, women IDPs have especially been exposed to regular attacks in food markets, public fountains and boreholes, limiting their access to food and potable water; people in host communities tend to avoid buying their goods. These systematic forms of discrimination wreak havoc on IDPs livelihoods and coping and survival mechanisms. As a result, displaced communities increasingly ask to be relocated to new host sites. Additionally, IDPs, particularly women, youth, and children who are out of school, are at high risk of sexual exploitation such as forced prostitution, as well as of physical assault, psychological abuse, rape or sexual assault, and forced and child marriage.

Moreover, this violent conflict has adverse implications on the economy in the Far North and North of the country, two of the poorest regions in Cameroon. These episodes of violence and growing insecurity have resulted in the loss of livelihoods, the forced displacement and migration of farmers, the disruption of cross-border trade and transhumance, and the inflation of prices of basic commodities. For instance, according to the Focus Group Discussion in Mayo Moskota, while the sub-division of Mayo Tsanaga had 12,000 inhabitants before the insurgency of Boko Haram in the region, in 2019, following the flux of forced displacement and the need for resettlement, almost 27,000 IDPs and refugees have been in direct need of arable land in the department. Additionally, the increase of militarisation in the region has fuelled agro-pastoral and land-related conflicts, frequently along inter-ethnic and religious lines. Indeed, due to the pressure on arable land and pastoral mobility, farmers, herders, and pastoralists affected by Boko Haram have been increasingly competing for rural resources and have tended to use weapons for cattle theft and land grabs.²⁹

During a workshop organised by WILPF Cameroon held in Maroua with civil society organisations from the Far North region, health

²⁵ See more in the "Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Cameroon: Parallel report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", WILPF Cameroon, March 2019 https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Cameroon-CESCR_EN.pdf

²⁶ See Baseline Study Report for the Development of the National Action Plan of the UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions in Cameroon, February 2017, WILPF Cameroon.

²⁷ UNHCR (2020). Operational portal refugee situations. Accessible online: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>

²⁸ See Assessment Workshop Group in Maroua, September 2019.

²⁹ From a Focus Group Discussion in Mayo Tsanaga, in 2019.

has been determined as another key dimension in the consequences of the conflict. Boko Haram insurgency has caused the abandonment of hospitals and health centres by health workers, the mass destruction of hospital equipment, medicines, and buildings, resulting in the lack of assistance and health and mental health care services and the increase in the number of people affected by the attacks of the warfare. The relocation and high concentration of IDPs in isolated districts around urban areas have led to the creation of slum settlements with scarce health infrastructure, entailing high exposure to epidemics, including typhoid, cholera, and malaria, that have received hardly any support from the Cameroonian government, nor from humanitarian actors, as they concentrate their actions rather in urban centres.

2.2. CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Already holding territory in the North of Nigeria and at the border with Chad, Boko Haram expansion along Cameroonian borders is inscribed in the porous nature of the border, high inequality and marginalisation. The extreme poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, limited education infrastructures and access, the lack of governmental commitment to ensure basic needs and the lack of socio-economic development, especially in the transborder villages between Cameroon and Nigeria, have been strong driving forces for the outbreak of violence, forced displacement, and recruitment into the ranks of Boko Haram insurgency. Poor public services and limited state engagement to development in the region, including the lack of access to potable water, healthcare, education, fuel, and the construction of roads, have translated into social injustice, poor governance, and the lack of state legitimacy in the trans-border region.

2.3. GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT

Gender expectations and roles have been mobilised in the Boko Haram insurgency in the North and Far-North region. While women, girls, men, and boys do not represent a monolithic group during and after a period of conflict, it is important to note that the region has been subjected to largely male-dominated politics before the outbreak of the current conflict, whereby women are essentially perceived in terms of marriage, reproduction, and child-bearing, while men represent the political and religious elites. These gender expectations have led to exclusion, stigmatisation, and structural inequalities, which have been particularly exacerbated during the

outbreak of violence.

The perpetuation of gender-based violence has been a core dimension in the armed conflict. While gender-based violence during the crisis continues to be under-reported and largely unaccounted by the government, WILPF Cameroon and other civil society organisations have expressed deep concern over the widespread gender-based violence and harmful practices by armed forces, including by Boko Haram militants and regular army soldiers in the North and Far-North region. Since 2014, psychological abuses, abductions, female genital mutilation, child and forced marriages, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and extra-judicial killings in displaced communities, in particular women, girls, and boys, have increased and prevailed with impunity in this conflict-affected region. Similarly, these violations have also been perpetrated on (ex-) hostages and (ex-) members of Boko Haram. Some women and girls survivors of these violations, tend to face extreme stigmatisation and discrimination after being liberated and escaping from abduction by Boko Haram, suspected by the host community of being Boko Haram supporters.

Survivors of gender-based violence, refugees, IDPs, and people at risk affected by the conflict require full and timely access to preventive health care services. However, despite the policy and legal provisions relating to the need to provide health protection in Cameroon (e.g. Preamble of the Constitution, Penal Code (Art. 277-281), CEDAW, Maputo Protocol), the lack of provision and access to health infrastructure and services remain severe, and combined with the socio-economic inequities, have exacerbated existing intersectional inequalities, wherein age, gender, migration, and marital status, disability, class, race, and other forms of discrimination are widely visible.³⁰ Different groups of women and girls continue to face extreme protection and health risk in the conflict-affected regions, in particular in terms of mental, sexual, and reproductive health.³¹ This includes the lack of access to prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, psycho-social care, contraceptive methods, abortion services, maternal and infant health care, and treatment for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.³² It is, therefore, crucial that the government provides adequate protection by implementing sexual and reproductive health care and service throughout the North and Far-North regions; this necessitates the full adoption

30 See Reproductive Justice (Hill Collins 2000; M. Bond Leonard 2017)

31 See UNFPA (2011) Pourquoi investir dans la santé de la reproduction au Cameroun. p.20-30. See The Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (1999) Women's Reproductive Rights in Cameroon: A Shadow Report

32 See Larissa Kojoué Kamga (2013) Enfants et VIH/Sida au Cameroun. Construction et implications de l'agenda politique.

of a reproductive justice framework to include all experiences of different groups of women and tackle rampant discriminatory practices in conflict and post-conflict situation.

In addition, the vast majority of survivors and people at risk, in particular women and girls, are undocumented; their access to economic opportunity, socio-political equality, psycho-social support, and legal aid services is severely limited. For instance, among displaced communities in Zamai, the lack of birth certificates, and more broadly statelessness, directly affect their access to basic civil registration documents, without which mobility and access to assistance and justice are rendered impossible. Along with the gender expectations, displaced women and girls returning from conflict-affected communities are mostly allowed to register as a precondition to resettlement in a host community with their children, while returning displaced men and boys, essentially perceived as suspicious and potentially from Boko Haram ranks, are confined in camps under military control or sent to Meri prison with very limited interaction with their families.

Women and girls in times of conflicts are often considered in monolithic terms as survivors of gender-based violence. However, the experience of women and girls in armed conflict is multifaceted and some have simultaneously played different roles, such as in tactical operations of the Boko Haram insurgency. For instance, women, girls, men, and boys, mostly Boko Haram's hostages, have cultivated farms to feed the militants and the prisoners of war. Women and girls have also enrolled as suicide bombers, engaged in intelligence gathering, and acted as informants equally as men.

However, men and boys have tended to play the role of combatants for the state army or Boko Haram. Additionally, given the government's failure to ensure economic opportunities and the high unemployment rates affecting a very large part of the population in the Far North and North of the country, youth, especially boys and young men, have been a particular target to join Boko Haram to secure livelihoods, security, and jobs. For instance, trade with Boko Haram generates more than 10,000 XAF (16 USD) for every liter of fuel sold between Nigeria and the Far North compared to less than 600 XAF (approximately 1 USD) before the fuel shortage. Former Boko Haram militants interviewed by WILPF Cameroon have been paid around 400,000 XAF (658 USD) for each person recruited into the ranks of Boko

Haram — almost twice the base salary of the highest paid civil servant in Cameroon, which represents a significant source of income and creates a massive economic dependence for unemployed youth to work with Boko Haram. These roles can be traced back to normative ideas of masculinity that manhood echoes in fighting and providing for the family, which has been significant in the recruitment of boys and men, especially in a context where properties have been destroyed and unemployment is at its peak.

2.4. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CONFLICT

2.4.1. GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

In 2015, when the number of attacks and abductions escalated in the North and Far-North regions, the Cameroonian government finally declared war on Boko Haram. While the government has deployed the regular Cameroonian defense forces to combat the insurgency, the government response to socio-economic development remains fragmented and scarce.

Following the growing expansion of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was set up by the Lake Chad Basin Commission to combat the insurgency and has been overseen in 2015 by the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). Comprising units and troops from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Benin, the MNJTF has conducted multinational military operations aiming to reduce regional and cross-border security issues, in particular the movement of Boko Haram, and to restore a safe and stable environment in the Lake Chad Basin. The first military section of the MNJTF was based in Mora, in the Far North region.

However, financial and logistical shortcomings have significantly reduced the effectiveness of the operations conducted by the MNJTF. Other key elements have acted as barriers in the impact of the mandate, including that the regional response has been limited to the military-mandated actions, and trans-regional development issues and the gender dimension have been largely neglected in the demilitarisation, disarmament, and reintegration processes. Moreover, even though credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuses by Cameroonian and Chadian soldiers have been reported,³³ the alleged perpetrators

33 Cameroon's Unfolding Catastrophe, June 2019, Report by the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ab13c5c620b859944157bc7/t/5cf685bc19d167000186c6fb/1559659972339/Cameroon%27s+Unfolding+Catastrophe+%28June+2019%29_report.pdf

have not been held accountable by the legal and judicial system.

This in spite of the fact that already in December 2017, the Committee against Torture expressed concerns at “(...) reports of alleged arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, acts of violence, sexual exploitation and extortion of asylum seekers in the Far North of Cameroon by military personnel, who had allegedly taken them to be members of Boko Haram (...)” and urged Cameroon to “ensure that effective investigations are conducted and that access to recourse is available to refugees and asylum seekers who were subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or extortion by military personnel.”³⁴

Concerning advocacy measures for the prevention of gender-based violence, a consultation framework on gender-based violence has been implemented at the regional and departmental level under the supervision of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs to address and coordinate interventions in Mokolo.

Subsequently, since the creation, in 2018, of the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration of former armed groups from the North-West and South-West regions and Boko Haram fighters in the North and Far-North region, the gender dimension has not been taken into consideration in the composition, programs, monitoring and evaluation of the Committee. However, as referred by WILPF Cameroon in its report submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, “the establishment of this committee should have preceded and accompanied by an inclusive national dialogue (...) and achieve a consensus-based and effective process of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration. (...) This despite the Government’s commitment in its National Action Plan 2018-2020 on Resolution 1325, to take into account the role of women in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs. In addition, this committee is not inclusive since it is composed mainly of representatives of ministries, with the exception of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Family in charge of gender issues.”³⁵

2.4.2. UN-LED INITIATIVES

Women’s Cohesion Spaces, created by UN Women Cameroon, have been significant in promoting peace between refugees, IDPs

and the host communities affected by Boko Haram in the Far-North region, such as in the Minawao camp. The UN Women Cameroon office in Maroua has trained about 100 women as community mediators to resolve conflicts in households and different religious communities in collaboration with the local chiefs and traditional councils.³⁶ In addition, some municipal councillors and regional chiefs were trained as community mediators to advocate for a gender dimension in their respective state institutions and reduce the risk of gender-based violence. Simultaneously, these community mediators assist in the process to fight against stigmatisation and attacks by providing educative talks to communities, as sustainable means to protect Boko Haram’s ex-hostages and returnees from affected villages in host communities. However, the outreach of the mediators and the number of training activities and beneficiaries remain very limited to date.

Given the high rate of illiteracy, the country’s lowest school enrolment rate, the closure and destruction of educational infrastructure, and other consequences of the ongoing armed conflict in the region, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations for Development (UNDP), and the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education built a Youth and Women’s Empowerment Center in Mokolo. The objective of this center is to rehabilitate, reintegrate, and facilitate access to education for IDPs, refugees, youth and women affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. In particular, the Youth and Women’s Empowerment Center, equipped with sewing machines and computers, provides psycho-social support with the delivery of ‘dignity kits’ (e.g. reusable sanitary pads, underwear, soap, washing powder, toothbrush and paste) and vocational training aimed at supporting pathways into formal education, employment and business creation (e.g. tailoring, computing, catering). However, the number of beneficiaries was not provided. The lack of standardisation in the humanitarian sectors makes it very difficult to compare the impacts of these interventions. The center lacks technical staff, trainers, and psycho-social support staff which limits drastically the number of IDPs, youth and women to get education, vocational skills, and training.

Income-generating activities provide economic and vocational training opportunities to empower women and girls to gain transferable skills. Complementary to food assistance, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has

34 Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Cameroon, CAT/C/CMR/CO/5, paragraphs 17 and 18 (b).

35 See https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Cameroon-CESCR_EN.pdf, p.12

36 See UN Women Humanitarian Bureau Office Periodic Report of 2019 based in Maroua.

provided cash-based interventions in Mokolo to deliver protection, assistance, and self-reliance. Cash-based assistance has been used through continuous cash transfer of 20,000 XAF (33 USD) per documented internally displaced or refugee family a month, which has functioned as a social safety net and contributed to income-generating activities in the protracted conflict. However, only documented persons with birth certificates and civil documents were able to benefit from the cash-based campaign.

2.4.3. LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY-LED INITIATIVES

As violence, exploitation, and abuses have increased dramatically during the armed conflict, most civil society organisations in the North and Far North region, including the Association to Fight Violence Against Women (ALVF), the Support Center for Self-Promotion for Sustainable Development (CAPROD), Action for Development (ACDEV) and the Community Humanitarian Emergency Board (COHEB), have aimed to reduce the risk of gender-based violence and the access to care and resource services. For instance, the association Rayon de Soleil provides psycho-social support to protect and empower survivors of gender-based violence in Maroua. Through care, dialogue, and community involvement projects, Rayon de Soleil has established relay point centers in local communities, which serve as a direct and safe contact for receiving social support and gender-based violence services.

2.5. KEY GAPS IN INTERVENTIONS

Although psycho-social, health, legal, protection, and economic services are provided to survivors of gender-based violence, the resources and capacities of local communities and the implementation of these integrated program services remain weak to effectively prevent and respond to gender-based violence and to enable trans-border communities and host communities affected by Boko Haram to be beneficiaries. Humanitarian assistance activities, providing 97% of the direct support to refugees and IDPs, have mainly focussed on the urban areas and major refugee camps, for instance, with a large focus on Minawao refugee camp; this has resulted in the concentration of IDPs in the urban centres and in farmers and other vulnerable people in rural areas being left without adequate access to livelihood services, infrastructures, and opportunities.

in-depth training and human resources, insufficient financial resources, and lack of follow-up after training programs prevail as significant gaps in interventions in the North and Far North region. Economic empowerment activities and livelihood support to enhance socio-economic reintegration and reduce vulnerability of gender-based violence survivors, displaced communities, and host communities, are largely insufficient. For instance, some of the women and girls, IDPs and former Boko Haram's hostages interviewed in Mora, have expressed the very limited access to return to schools, to acquire business skills, and participate in vocational training.

Moreover, the failure of the government to take into account local realities and to involve communities, traditional and religious leaders as key players in planning and implementing social cohesion activities persists (e.g. no sustainable conflict resolution programs, no permanent assistance and protection for people at risk, including mental, sexual and reproductive health care and services, water, food and sanitation facilities). Those programs require a citizen-driven and regional approach, by taking particular account of the needs of children, IDPs, host communities and local populations in the design of their interventions. The participation of men and boys needs to be strengthened in promoting gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights and health, and addressing harmful masculinities in military, discriminatory practices, and gender-based violence during and after armed conflicts. In most humanitarian interventions in the region, gender approach to conflict has been persistently defined in terms of gender-based violence; and gender-based violence has been essentially understood as sexual violence, which limits a deeper understanding of the causes and drivers of the armed conflict.

Poor coordination between humanitarian actors, local communities and the government, lack of



SECTION 3 : GENDER CONFLICT ANALYSIS FOR ADAMAWA AND EAST CLUSTERS

3.1. CONFLICT DYNAMICS

With the crisis in the CAR, the main conflicts affecting communities in the Adamawa and East regions are related to the regular influx of refugees and sporadic incursions of armed groups from the CAR, which have caused significant forced displacement of trans-border villages

between Cameroon and the CAR. “I am a native of the Eastern region of Cameroon and since my childhood we have been used to the permanent presence of refugees from the Central African Republic. This regular influx of people from that country increased dramatically since 2013;” witnessed a Cameroonian woman from the Eastern region.

Cameroon is home to the largest number of Central African refugees, with 252,000 refugees, in the East and Adamawa. Over 70 percent of refugees live in host communities. With already high levels of poverty in the region (Adamawa, 41.7 percent, and East, 30 percent), the influx of CAR refugees has overstretched already limited basic services. Only 43 percent of refugee girls attend school (compared to 67 percent for refugee boys).

OCHA: Cameroon: Humanitarian Response Plan 2019 (summary), January 2019⁵³

The Central African refugees in Cameroon have always indicated that the main reasons for choosing the country as a destination were their security and safety. Cameroon was seen as a stable and peaceful country, compared to, for instance, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which both had experienced conflicts. A refugee girl from CAR said that “the living conditions in CAR were far better than what we have in Cameroon but our consolation is the peaceful environment that we enjoy in this country.”

The main activities in these regions are agriculture and animal husbandry. As a result, with the arrival of the Central African population as refugees in Cameroon, mostly made up of herders, the agro-pastoral conflicts have worsened. The Mbororo herders from CAR, whose number is higher in most villages and refugee sites in Adamawa and the East, have an impact on the culture of the local population.³⁷ A Cameroonian woman from the Eastern region witnessed and indicated that: “Farmers and grazers are always in conflict because of the divagation of cows and sheeps that causes serious damage in farms.” These result in conflicts and tensions between populations, in fights, and in the cessation of economic activities and local development. “The rate of aggression (physical, psychological and even sexual) and insecurity has increased and people from both sides are irritable and get angry for the least things”, said the same Cameroonian woman from the Eastern region. Participants in a focus group discussion in Djohong (Adamawa) shared that corruption of traditional leaders

sometimes aggravates the situation: “Regarding agro-pastoral problems, when a Cameroonian files a complaint to the chief regarding the destruction of his farm by a cow or oxen of a refugee, the latter bribes the chief to make him suspend the case instead of addressing the issue properly.”

In order to resolve these tensions, it is important to educate the population, particularly young girls, about their rights and the importance of peaceful cohesion, increase youth employment, and adopt a system for better distribution of local resources. Also of importance is the need to allocate land for cultivation only, separated from those for only pastoral purposes.

The massive influx of refugees from CAR with a resultant pressure on existing infrastructures, coupled with poor resource management, are the main causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities. A refugee woman from the Eastern region said: “Conflict may arise from a confrontation between children and gradually involve other members of the community.”

As seen by a Cameroonian woman from the Eastern region, “... we have lost all the comfort and harmony we had, due to pressure on infrastructures. The population in schools has increased, all the trees around the city are cut of for firewood and most notably the majority of the population initially made of Christian farmers is now made of Muslim shepherds with a great impact on community life.”

Another dynamic, which has led to tensions between refugees and host communities, is the local perception of the support provided to Central African refugees by humanitarian

53 <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-humanitarian-response-plan-2019-summary-january-2019>

37 Study on agro-pastoral conflicts in the northern, Adamaoua and eastern regions of Cameroon - Final Report, January 2016, page 19, available at:

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/etude_sur_letat_actuel_du_conflit_agro-pastoral_dans_les_regions_du_nord_de_lest_et_adamaoua_du_cameroon.pdf

actors. This constitutes frustration among host communities who say they also have the right to benefits because they face similar problems as refugees, including poor educational structures, lack of health assistance, malnutrition, and lack of shelter. For instance, a Cameroonian woman interviewed in the East region said that with the action of international non-governmental organizations, refugees have more support than the host community because the latter benefits from acquired knowledge of more efficient farming techniques, higher quality seeds, and larger farmlands. She explained: "The funniest part is that as was the case with most of the refugees we are living in precarious conditions but humanitarian assistance came just for refugees and completely no attention to members of host communities."

In the Adamawa region, the border region with the CAR and Nigeria, many armed gangs have been operating for years, kidnapping pastoralists or members of their families and then demanding ransoms. As reported by *Le Monde* in January 2020: "According to various livestock groups, more than 2 billion XFA, more than 3 million EUR, in ransom payments have been made since the beginning of the crisis. Between 2015 and 2018, more than 300 people have been kidnapped in the Adamawa region, according to the cattle breeders association Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA). In 2018 alone, the Association for the Promotion of Livestock in the Sahel and Savannah (APESS) reported that at least 250 Cameroonians have been kidnapped there. These figures are probably underestimated: some families do not file complaints for fear of reprisals. According to APESS, several dozen hostages have been executed by their captors in recent years."³⁸

Some IDPs coming from conflict-affected regions of Cameroon (Far North, North West and South West) move to the Eastern region because of the presence of their relatives in this region or because of the lower cost of farming land. This creates a new conflict dynamic in the East since these IDPs are regarded with suspicion by the local population. IDPs from the Far North are, for instance, called Boko Haram associates and IDPs from the North West and the South West English-speaking regions are accused of being Ambazonian supporters.

Land conflicts are also related to disputes between wealthy businessmen, including foreigners, who acquire very large areas of land

for mining and agro-pastoral initiatives and the local population who are deprived of land portions they inherited from their ancestors.³⁹ Corporations mainly in the extractive sector from other regions and countries settling in the East are acquiring large pieces of land at cheap prices, reducing access to land for the native population.⁴⁰

Other conflicts outlined by interviewed persons are caused by poor governance of administrative, political and traditional authorities, due to clientelism and inequality between men and women, unemployment, underemployment, lack of equity.

3.2. GENDER DIMENSION OF CONFLICT

Extreme poverty and some cultural practices do not promote education. The patriarchal culture is also a major cause of conflict in the Adamawa region.

In the Adamawa and East regions, women are the most active in communities, and are mainly involved in farming and small businesses aiming at providing food on a daily basis to their family. They are in charge of fetching water and fire wood in locations sometimes far from the village, which exposes them to different types of violence and conflict. For instance, when the number of refugees increased significantly, water points became hot zones where some members of host communities perpetrated violence against refugee girls and women. Many cases of physical and sexual aggression were registered involving women and girls looking for firewood in the forest around the villages. Mbororo women have diverse activities including transformation and sale of milk into different by-products. Although it is not always visible, Mbororo women are breeders and own cattle, they are not just "ranchers' wives." In addition, Mbororo women also live of traditional craft activities and traditional knowledge for healing purposes.

The role of women as conflict prevention and resolution agents is not recognized in the Mbororo Muslim community nor in the local population. The majority of women and girls are not educated, have no say in decision-making processes, and therefore cannot contribute with their opinions. This practice hinders their development and results in the ever-increasing rate of early and forced marriages. Women are not perceived as having a leading role but rather as victims and are generally excluded from endeavours for conflict resolution (e.g. relating to land disputes,

38 Unofficial translation of https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/01/15/au-cameroun-les-eleveurs-victimes-d-une-guerre-des-kidnappings_6025996_3212.html

39 <https://www.voaafrrique.com/a/le-difficile-combat-des-d%C3%A9fenseurs-de-l-environnement-au-cameroun-/5200590.html>

40 <http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2010/05/cameroonlandrightsstudy09fr.pdf>

farmers-grazers conflicts, or social cohesion). Despite often being disproportionately affected by conflicts, women, including women survivors of conflict, are never invited during conflict resolution because of social considerations that women should not sit among men and men make decisions without the consent of women.

Men are active in various businesses including mining and timber exploitation. They also undertake most of the community development endeavours. They generally cater for their wives and daughters. Among refugees, some men were wealthy in CAR, and suddenly find themselves in refugee camps depending wholly on the support of humanitarian organizations and, thus, feel frustrated. "In the case of refugees, men who have lost everything in the crisis have withdrawn into themselves, leaving all family responsibilities to women" said one person in the focus group in Bertoua in the Eastern region.

Since women's roles in community life and social action do not change much with displacement or even expand, they cope better with this new situation than men. Some women started considering themselves as equal partners to men in family operations, as men lose their role as breadwinners, thus generating conflict in the family with various types of violence. Even though there was no formal document regarding this, it is worth indicating that the question was discussed during interventions evaluation meetings. The observation was made by humanitarians and UN Women. The He for She project tried to mitigate men's anger at the Space for social cohesion, which they felt made their women arrogant and disdainful.

In their new environment, refugees did not receive much help, said the persons interviewed and had to pay for whatever they needed, which is a big problem since they left everything behind because of the war. A refugee from Bertoua, in the East of the country, noted that "there is peace in Cameroon but we have no means for leaving". The refugees who were interviewed suggested that everyone should be informed and sensitized on the dangers of gender-based violence, especially forced marriage, a form of violence that women face every day in their communities whether in conflict or at peace.

3.3. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CONFLICT

Mechanisms to deal with the conflicts and violence in these regions have been developed

by the state, private and social structures that work to provide care for victims and survivors, as well as those who strive for women and girls' empowerment through capacity building.

3.3.1. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

To address the challenges faced by refugees and host communities in the Adamawa and Eastern regions, the government has put in place many structures and taken several actions including:

- The Regional and Departmental delegations of MINPROFF and MINAS, Centers for Women's Empowerment and Family, which work with women and girls to facilitate the development of their right to equality both in the community and within the family.
- Creation of the Women's Network: this network plays the role of MINPROFF and reports to it in localities where state structures are not represented. Its aim is to bring together women of the locality by association and grouping in order to work together and fight against the dictates made to women and girls.
- The creation, with UN Women's support, of gender desks in some police stations to address gender-based violence in the community.
- The creation, with UN Women's support, of Spaces for Social Cohesion in refugee camps located in these regions, to create a safe space for women and girls, to share information, learn new skills and receive support.
- Organization of vigilante groups in the Adamawa region with the support of the Head of State to fight highway robbers active in that region.⁴¹

3.3.2. UN AND INGO-LED INITIATIVES

Additionally, international organizations are key actors in leading humanitarian response in the region. For instance, International Medical Corps (IMC) provides basic health care, nutrition, gender-based violence prevention and response services and child protection. It also provides water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH) in the underserved East, Adamawa, North and Far North Regions. In the Eastern and Adamawa region, IMC works in the area of gender-based violence in the Eastern and Adamawa regions. Through this programme, it provides psychosocial support to women and girls survivors of

41 <https://www.investiraucameroun.com/secureite/2802-12232-davantage-de-groupes-d-autodefense-pour-relever-la-secureite-dans-l-extreme-nord-le-nord-lad-amaoua-et-l-est-du-cameroun>

sexual violence. Unfortunately, they do not cooperate with local NGOs, which, thus, leads to their recurrent complaints. UNHCR leads and coordinates international action for the protection and well-being of refugees; it also provides assistance to IDPs in the North-West and South-West regions.

A scoping mission by humanitarian actors in Adamawa revealed the prevalence of marriages of girls aged under 16, both among the refugee and host populations. Unfortunately, it is challenging to address this situation because of the absence of birth certificates to ascertain the age of girls sent to marriage. Furthermore, given that the lack of civil documentation is a general concern in these regions, working for civil documentation should be a priority for NGOs, since the lack of such documentation puts many individuals, particularly refugees and children, at risk of statelessness.

3.3.3. LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY-LED INITIATIVES

As a result of the Central African crisis, several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Eastern and Adamawa regions have oriented their activities towards humanitarian interventions, peace building, social cohesion and the protection of women and girls. Among the CSOs very active in the region are FEPEM, ASSEJA, ASAD, ACAFEJ, Plan International, International Medical Corps, ADRA, LWF, JRS and several others. These organisations have successfully implemented projects aimed at strengthening psychosocial, medical, food and non-food items monitoring and support to provide assistance to refugees and IDPs.

UN Agencies and some governmental initiatives have tried to address conflicts between herders and farmers and IDPs and host communities in the Eastern region. The platform Cameroon Women for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education, led by WILPF Cameroon, for which the association Femmes pour la Promotion du Leadership Moral (FEPEM) is the regional coordinator, focuses on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. Other organizations are added to FEPEM such as the Hommes Engagés pour la Promotion du Genre et Égalité entre Sexes (HEPROGES) and Youth for Peace. In the Adamawa region, Fédération des Réseaux d'Associations Féminines du Cameroun (FERAFAM) provides assistance to women and girls in places where the ministerial structures are not established. Through awareness-raising sessions, the celebration of international days such as International Girls' Day and Rural Women's Day, women are assisted to know and claim their rights. These actions also have the role of challenging the populations of their respective

areas on the importance of peace and peaceful coexistence in order to facilitate the integration of Central African refugees in this part of the country.

According to the organizations interviewed, conflict prevention programs executed by NGOs and state actors have made significant progress in addressing gender-based violence through the provision of holistic care even though victims are still silent in fear of reprisals from their husbands and the community. The fear of stigma prevents women from reporting abuses.

FEPEM's Center for the Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship has brought change in the life of some women and girls in particular and in society in general by helping them face cultural barriers and overcome ancestral practices that are obstacles to their development. FEPEM has built a centre for literacy and empowerment of women and girls in Bertoua (Mandjou). A refugee woman attending this programme revealed: "Now I am attending an adult literacy program with FEPEM, three days a week from 3 to 5 pm. In this program we are taught how to read, write and count. We are also initiated into small scale businesses related to food transformation. In addition, we are sensitized on gender-based violence, the importance of the education of girls, the dangers of early marriage and pregnancies, etc.".

The Cameroonian Association of Women Lawyers (ACAFEJ) work prevents early marriages, rape, breast ironing and female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women. They fight against violations of women's rights. ACAFEJ is an organization active in the field of women emancipation and youth empowerment. In the Eastern region, the association is active in the Kadey, and Boumba and Ngoko divisions.

The mission of the Association d'Assistance au Développement (ASAD), working in the East, is to bring together those involved in work-linked training in order to promote the sustainable socio-economic development of young people in Cameroon through integral training.

3.4. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF INTERVENTIONS

Governmental service providers, NGOs, traditional and religious leaders through their interventions have actively strived to promote social cohesion among populations in these regions. A Cameroonian woman from the Eastern region said "some organizations are sensitizing and educating us on social and peaceful cohesion which has helped reduce friction with refugees." The fact is that much has been done by the UN,

international and local NGOs and the government in the field to improve the living conditions of the refugees. For example, the refugee sites are equipped with water points, shelters, food rations as well as spaces for the education of children.

However, these actors agree that these humanitarian aid is a source of conflict with regard to the host populations who, for example, remain in need of some of these facilities. Because of the presence of refugees there has been construction and rehabilitation of some hospitals by UNHCR through its implementing partners. However, the local community feels left behind by international organizations because even if access to hospitals is not a difficulty for them, they do not benefit from some free health care as is the case for refugees from CAR. The secretary of the women's network in Djohong said, "We appreciate the efforts of UNHCR and its partners for our health but they have to take care not only of the refugees but also of the host population." The small internally displaced community living in these areas have difficulty in getting health care because of poverty. Fortunately, the humanitarian intervention associated with the latest influx of refugees from CAR is now allocating 30% of the action for the benefit of the local population.

3.5. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

The dropout rate of girls from school in particular is a key challenge in all the communities in these regions. This situation is linked to patriarchal cultural and traditional practices, which unfortunately increase over the years. The patriarchal culture and poverty in the Eastern and Adamawa regions are the causes of many early and forced marriages in these areas. Child, early and forced marriages are part of tradition and culture in these regions and have been exacerbated with the influx of refugees, the loss of land and other actions that put the local population in precarious life. Girls under 18 are forced into marriage at the expense of their schooling. Young boys, meanwhile, are engaged in farming, animal husbandry and small trade.

The presence of Central African refugees has also caused an imbalance in land tenure, leading to an increase in the price of plots of land. The agro-pastoral conflicts are no less without consequences because the plots cultivated by the farmers are devastated by herders' cattle.

Water problems are also a challenge in the East and in Adamawa because of the lack of boreholes and water points. The small proportion of boreholes are not sufficient for daily use for each household, as a displaced person in the Yadémé neighbourhood in Bertoua said: "We have great difficulty finding drinking water in the suburbs where we are. We have barely 20 liters of drinking water for the large family and are obliged to travel many kilometers to find water."

There has been a considerable increase in the population with the refugee influx from CAR and IDPs but food resources have not increased accordingly, which has resulted in an increase in banditry in the Eastern region. Also, the lack of vocational training and income-generating activities have made the Central African people who have arrived in Cameroon dependent on each other. This results in an increase of poverty, food dependency of refugees and the decrease in resources to feed the local population.

In addition to malnutrition, there are security issues related to the lack of birth certificates, peculiar to the populations of these areas. Besides, as noticed by FEPEM, the insecurity is worsened by the multiplication of fake birth certificates and Cameroonian identity cards which some Central African citizens hold to move freely in the community.

Most of the refugees interviewed do not want to go back to CAR since their properties were completely destroyed, and security threats still persist in their country due to the non-disarmament of non-State armed groups in CAR who continue to create terror in some villages. Out of the hundreds of thousands refugees settled in Cameroon, very few have registered at UNHCR for voluntary repatriation.

The living cost in these regions has almost doubled due to the lack of food resources, which no longer allow the population to be fed. IDPs from the North-West and South-West regions who have come to the Eastern region also struggle to make a living for lack of trade. In addition to the non-availability of activities for these needy people and even for the host community, the relief efforts are insufficient to enable some people to initiate income-generating activities and are therefore forced to live in extreme poverty.





**SECTION 4 : GENDER CONFLICT ANALYSIS
NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-
WEST REGIONS**

Internally displaced trader from the South West at Market B in the town of Dschang - Western Region, September 30th, 2019
© Wilpf Cameroon
Author: Griote

4.1. TYPES OF CONFLICT

The principal conflict in the North West Region of Cameroon is what is commonly referred to as the “Anglophone Crisis” which started in 2016. The “Anglophone crisis” was spurred by the government’s violent suppression of peaceful protests staged by lawyers and teachers of the English regions against marginalization and predominantly discriminatory policies. These protests, according to teachers and lawyers, were the last resort after several complaints over suppressive policies which continuously jeopardized the English sub-systems of education and English common law. It is worth noting that although the crisis started in 2016, its root causes are embedded in historical factors which could be traced as far back as the colonial period under the British and the French. The conflict has since 2016 escalated into a web of violent attacks and counter attacks from government forces and the population, which eventually led to the insurgence of the non-state armed group commonly known as the “Ambazonia Liberation Fighters,” also referred to as the “Amba boys.”⁴²

In addition to the “Anglophone crisis”, other minor conflicts exist in the North West region, including: farmer–grazer conflicts between the Mbororo cattle herders and farmers, inter-tribal conflicts, land and boundary disputes between communities and families, ethnic conflicts. Family squabbles and student riots in universities are also present. The main actors involved in conflicts in the North-West and South-West regions are: farmers, grazers, non-state armed groups (including the so-called “Amba boys”), military, the state, members of the diaspora, traditional chiefs and communities.

4.2. GENDER DIMENSION OF THE CONFLICT

In the “Anglophone crisis”-related conflict, men and women, boys and girls are actively involved either as perpetrators or victims. Men and boys play the roles of combatants, spies, and informants. Within the ranks of the “Amba boys,” the leaders are referred to as “Generals” or “Commanders”. This appellation depicts a position of power and authority within a typical military setting. According to community members interviewed, the Generals command all the affairs

of the group and pass judgment on those who are brought before them being accused of being spies for the government or any other case reported against them.⁴³ In these situations, the “General” decides on the fate of such cases. The Generals also determine the amount of ransom to be paid for their release. Women and girls, in addition to acting as spies and informants, provide food and care for the combatants.

Women and girls are also leaders of some troops within the ranks of the “Amba boys” and are commonly referred to as “Queen mothers.” The appellation “Queen Mother” is closely derived from the authority and respect awarded to the mother of a traditional ruler. Within the context of most tribes in the region, and within a traditional hierarchy, the “Queen Mother” has power and authority to make some decisions in the community. She can also take part in most of the decision-making processes, which involve deliberations with men. In camps led by women, the Queen mothers hardly go out of the camps for missions but await reports from combatants, dish out orders and pass judgment on victims brought before them accused of being traitors to the “struggle.”

Furthermore, while young men between the ages of 18-25 are often targeted by the “Amba boys” to be recruited into their ranks, they are often also targeted by the military as being part of the amba group. Girls are subject to sexual violence perpetrated both by the “Amba boys” and by the military.⁴⁴ It is worth noting that fighters within the ranks of the “Amba boys” mainly range between the ages of 18 to 25 years but also include children.⁴⁵ Several reasons account for the targeting of this particular age group: young men and boys are more susceptible to being radicalized as a result of their youthful energy; these aspects are easily exploited to get through to them. Secondly, they are easily lured through money, cars and other material things that the Amba boys have the tendency of providing. In addition to these financial and material incentives, the quest for power and revenge, superiority, fascination with arms and a sense of belonging also act as pull factors. Poverty, youth unemployment and economic hardship which greatly affects young men in the age group 19-25 are common reasons why they are targeted for recruitment into armed

42 <https://www.dw.com/en/who-are-camerouns-self-named-ambazonia-secessionists/a-50639426>; <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/sep/03/cameroon-pupils-risk-being-shot-back-to-school>

43 See, for example, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/28/cameroon-new-attacks-civilians-troops-separatists>

44 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ab13c5c620b859944157bc7/t/5cf685bc19d167000186c6fb/1559659972339/Cameroon%27s+Unfolding+Ca-tastrophe+%28June+2019%29_report.pdf

45 <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/un-officials-call-enhanced-protection-civilians-facing-escalating-violence-cameroon>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49529774>

and terrorist groups.

4.3. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CONFLICT

4.3.1. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Militarization of conflict affected regions

According to the testimony of an internally displaced woman from the South West living in Yaoundé, the deployment of the military in the conflict-affected regions has been seen as great help: "I think the presence of the military helped me and my family in particular... because we lived close to a military camp, we never experienced any attacks from the Amba boys." On the other hand, internally displaced women from the North West to the Center and Littoral regions explained that non-state armed groups were fighting to protect them and only responded in violent ways when provoked by the military. According to most of the women, the military constituted a serious threat especially in the communities. They attested that it was the military burning down their houses harassing them on their way from the farm. "We could no longer go to our farms because the military shoots at anybody they see on the streets...many women have lost their lives as a result of these shootings" (internally displaced women from North West). Young men also shared a similar opinion about the military as they explained that the military carried out random and arbitrary arrests and suspected young men of being amba fighters or spies. "My brother was arrested and detained by the military for months because he was suspected of being an Amba supporter" (Internally displaced young man from South West). Various actors, including the UN and the African Commission on Human Rights, have called on the government to investigate allegations of human rights violations by the military.⁴⁶

Internet cuts in the South West and North West

On 17 January 2017, the government ordered

the suspension of internet services in the North West and South West regions; the suspension lasted for 93 days.⁴⁷ The misuse of the internet (especially with the circulation of fake information, images and videos) contributed to reviving the conflict in the affected regions. Announcing the lifting of the ban in April 2017, the government said it reserved the right to "take measures to stop the internet once again becoming a tool to stoke hatred and division among Cameroonians."⁴⁸ After a brief resumption, the government shut down social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp on 30 September 2017.⁴⁹ This suspension only ended in April 2018. These two regions went without an internet connection and access to social media platforms for more than 270 days in 2017 and 2018.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as other UN human rights mechanisms and civil society organisations expressed serious concerns about restrictions on Internet access in these regions, which have constrained the exercise of several human rights, including but not limited to the right to freedom of expression.⁵⁰

Creation of a National Commission for Bilingualism and multiculturalism (2017)

A National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (CNPBM) was established in January 2017. Its creation is a step forward. However, the CNPBM has serious shortcomings, including the fact that its members are all appointed by the President of the Republic, which does not guarantee their independence vis-à-vis the executive power.⁵¹ Moreover, only 4 out of its 15 members are women. The criteria for selection of members set out in the Decree of 23 January 2017 on the creation, organisation and operation of the CNPBM mention competence, moral integrity and intellectual honesty; these criteria should be expanded to also take into account expertise in human rights and non-discrimination. The UN Committee on economic, social and cultural rights has also recommended

46 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25566&LangID=E>; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25817&LangID=E>; <https://www.achpr.org/pressrelease/detail?id=103>; <https://www.fidh.org/en/impacts/the-african-commission-condemns-the-crimes-committed-during-the>

47 See Sophie Ngassa, 'The Damage Caused by the 93-Day Internet Blackout in Cameroon.' <https://slate.com/technology/2017/08/the-damage-caused-by-cameroon-s-93-day-internet-blackout.html>

48 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39665244>

49 Africa News, Cameroon Blocks Social Media Access in Restive English-speaking Regions <http://www.africanews.com/2017/09/30/cameroon-blocks-social-media-access-in-restive-english-speaking-regions/>

50 E/C.12/CMR/CO/4, para. 64 and 65; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21165&LangID=E>; <https://internetwith-outborders.org/open-letter-to-cameroonian-government-on-internet-connectivity-in-anglophone-regions/>

51 <https://www.osidimbea.cm/institutions/presidence/commission-bilinguisme/>

that Cameroon “ensure the effective operation of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism by ensuring its independence and allocating sufficient human, financial and technical resources to it.”⁵²

There has not been a clear implementation strategy of the activities of the commission nor transparency on its means of actions and results expected or achieved. Also, this commission is presented as a tool of reinforcing national unity and willingness to live together; this is however yet to be achieved and the benefits of its activities have not been felt by the population. Additional limitations include the fact that this commission is based in Yaoundé, which is also where most of its activities are carried out, and the fact that its membership is not inclusive of Anglophone influential leaders .

Measures to address discrimination in the legal system

The Constitution recognises French and English as the two official languages of Cameroon. The country’s legal system is mainly based on French civil law whereas English-speaking regions operate under Common law. In 2016, lawyers in English-speaking regions started protesting to ask for common-law trained judges (instead of civil law and French-speaking judges) in order to ensure proper administration of justice; for laws such as the OHADA Uniform Acts,⁵³ which were available exclusively in French, to be translated into English; for the Common-Law system of education in the Anglo-Saxon universities of Buea and Bamenda to be respected and strengthened through the possible creation of a law school.⁵⁴

In response, the government created new departments at the National School of Administration and Magistracy and recruited English-speaking magistrates and 1000 bilingual teachers. While these represented an important milestone in resolving the crisis, nonetheless, a

major challenge is that the recruited administrators are yet to be trained and posted. It has slowed down the process as it takes quite a long time for civil servants to be trained and posted in Cameroon. A quick fix could be a direct recruitment of already trained English-speaking administrators and lawyers into public services.

Creation of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee (2018)

On 30 November 2018, presidential decree 2018/719 created a National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee responsible of organizing, supervising and managing the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-fighters of Boko Haram and armed groups in the North West and South West regions.⁵⁵ The establishment of this committee, however, should have been preceded and accompanied by an inclusive national dialogue with the English-speaking communities to reduce radicalisation, ensure appeasement, understand and respond to demands, and achieve a consensus-based and effective DDR process. The gender dimension was not taken into consideration in the composition of the committee, which consists only of men, nor in its mandate defined by decree 2018/719. In addition, while the committee includes in its management committee mainly representatives of ministries, it does not include the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Family, the ministry that is in charge of gender issues and of the secretariat of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.⁵⁶ This is despite the Government’s commitment to take into account the role of women in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs, made in its National Action Plan 2018-2020 on UNSC Resolution 1325.⁵⁷ The committee does not include representatives of civil society either.

Moreover, there is no clear procedure as to the reintegration plan for combatants who dropped their guns and no structural nor tangible solutions put in place to reintegrate them into

52 E/C.12/CMR/CO/4, para. 63

53 OHADA is the Organization for the Harmonization in Africa of Business Law. A uniform act is the recollection of all relevant legal norms needed to ease business in the Member States of OHADA. <https://www.ohada.org/index.php/en/ohada-reference-texts/uniform-acts>

54 <http://contranocendi.org/index.php/en/news/88-anglophone-cameroon-common-law-lawyers-protest>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/cameroon-teachers-lawyers-strike-english-161205095929616.html>

55 <https://www.prc.cm/en/news/the-acts/decrees/3177-decree-n-2018-719-of-30-novembre-2018-to-establish-the-nationaldisarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-committee> ; <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/676074/politique/le-camerounlance-un-processus-de-desarmement-dans-les-zones-en-conflit/>

56 <https://www.prc.cm/fr/multimedia/documents/6764-decret-no-2018-719-du-30-11-2018-cnldr>

57 <https://agencecamerounpresse.com/defense/les-chefs-de-centre-r%C3%A9gionaux-du-comit%C3%A9-national-ded%C3%A9sarmement,-d%C3%A9mobilisation-et -r%C3%A9insertion-cnldr-named%C3%A9s.html> ; <https://www.prc.cm/en/multimedia/documents/6764-decret-no-2018-719-du-30-11-2018-cnldr>

; Republic of Cameroon : National Action Plan of Resolution 1325 and related United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, see Product 1.2 (vi), available at: https://wipf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Cameroon_UNSCR-1325-NAP_FR_Aout-2017.pdf

the community including through employment opportunities. There are no protection mechanisms for ex combatants against reprisals from the government and the non state armed group.

The Major National Dialogue to resolve the crisis in the English-speaking regions (2019)

A dialogue to resolve the crisis in the English-speaking regions, officially known as the Major National Dialogue, took place from 30 September to 4 October 2019. However, despite some positive outcomes and proposals, such as the release of hundreds of political prisoners,⁵⁸ the dialogue had several shortcomings. The major separatist groups boycotted its proceedings, while the Social Democratic Front only gave partial endorsement to them.

The use of power from both the government and the separatist movements has been prominent, lacking a pacific conflict resolution strategy.

The inclusion of women among those involved in the Major National Dialogue was very low as demonstrated by rates of the involvement of women in the dialogue from regions: South (29 men and 1 woman, that is 3.33%); North (13 men and 2 women, 13.33%) and the Far North (21 men and 3 women, 12.5%). At the level of positions of responsibility, only one woman was heading a commission and there were 14 women in total in the commissions. Also, only 18 out of the 119 people empowered in the facilitation of the national dialogue either as chairpersons, vice-chairs, rapporteurs or resource persons were women (i.e. a participation percentage of 15.12%).⁵⁹

The Major National Dialogue also failed to include women's voices, demands and needs in a substantial way.⁶⁰ For instance, most of the primary recommendations of the Cameroon Women Consultation for National Dialogue Platform were not taken up; these included:

- Putting in place measures that will reduce

impunity of perpetrators of gender-based violence;

- Proper implementation of decentralization laws and policies;
- Ensure gender-balanced representation as well as an intentional focus on gender issues in all the Commissions envisaged after the dialogue;
- Incorporation of a ceasefire for all sides as a primary consideration for a successful DDR process
- Adoption and implementation of holistic and innovative programs that seek to address the situations of women including indigenous women and women with disabilities, children, the aged and youth affected by conflicts and make provisions for the establishment of trauma specialized structures to address issues of gender-based violence in humanitarian settings.

Provision of humanitarian aid for populations affected by the conflict, including IDPs

Proper needs assessments are not carried out to identify the needs of victims of the conflict, including IDPs and more measures must be taken to prevent fraudulent access to scarce humanitarian assistance by persons who do not need it.

4.3.2. UN AND INGO LED INITIATIVES

International organisations in humanitarian response are key actors in leading humanitarian initiatives in the conflict affected regions. For instance, Doctors without Borders (MSF) is actively working in the South and North West Regions to provide health care in emergency situations resulting from the crisis. Its services are available especially on so-called "ghost town" days⁶¹ when people do not have access to hospitals. MSF has operated short emergency numbers through which they can be reached in case of an emergency and an ambulance will be made available not only to transport the victim to a hospital but also at a subsidized rate. According to community members who have benefitted from this service, the organization covers the entire

58 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25113&LangID=E>

59 <http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/English-Advocay-Paper-post-dialogue.pdf>

60 See PLATFORM FOR CAMEROONIAN WOMEN'S CONSULTATION FOR THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE EVALUATIVE REPORT RELATED TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION, ADVOCACY FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MAIN NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN'S VOICES IN THE ONGOING PEACE PROCESS, available at: <http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/English-Advocay-Paper-post-dialogue.pdf>

61 The "ghost town" operations were initiated by secessionists as a strategy of protest against the government, including by closing schools and suspending economic activity: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroon-the-risk-of-crisis-of-the-anglophone-crisis-worried-the-francophones>; <https://observers.france24.com/en/20170110-cameroon-goes-quiet-operation-ghost-town-protest>; Communiqué issued by the Governor on 17 September 2018 / communiqué from the Prefect of Fako restricting movements and associations in their administrative districts from 30 September to 2 October 2018

cost of treatment for very critical cases.

UNFPA coordinates the gender-based violence clusters consisting of civil society organizations operating in the South West region. These clusters are geared towards creating a database for incidents, prevalence and case management especially in the present crisis situation. Civil society organizations are trained on gender-based violence response in conflict while facilitating and coordinating the different levels at which International Organizations are involved. Some of these International Organizations are Plan International Cameroon, OCHA, the Norwegian Refugee Council, UN Women, the Danish Refugee Council.

4.3.3. LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY LED INITIATIVES

The South West North West Women's Task Force (SNWOT) is a women coalition aimed at advocating for the return of peace and normalcy to both affected regions and for the rights of women to be involved in all peace building processes. They have organized two sit-down lamentation campaigns⁶² for women in the South West region calling for a meaningful and inclusive dialogue. During these lamentations, women wore black clothes, carried plants that are symbols of peace and messages of peace and dialogue while wailing on the streets. They organised a press conference⁶³ presenting a position paper on women's perspectives on the conflict.⁶⁴ The key message was emphasising the suffering of women and girls amidst the conflict and calling for both factions to the conflict to protect women and girls. The paper further highlighted that women are partners in decision making, peacebuilding and conflict resolution and demanded that their role and stake be recognized.

SOUTH WEST REGION

In terms of humanitarian response and support for IDPs, the government has provided limited support, i.e. food and beddings, for displaced persons whose homes were destroyed as a result of confrontations between the military and the "Amba boys." A few civil society organisations and church groups also provide support to IDPs. Organizations like Hope for the Needy and Vulnerable and Girls Excel, for instance, reach out

to IDPs hidden in the bushes to provide menstrual hygiene kits for women and girls who do not have access to this basic commodity.

Organizations like Martin Luther Jr. King Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF) are currently providing psychosocial support to victims of trauma and violence. LUKMEF promotes hygiene and sanitation, through providing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services such as clean water and water purifiers for IDPs living in the bushes. Reach Out Cameroon is engaged in providing counseling and financial support for victims, including to victims of gender-based violence within targeted communities.

Additionally, Stand Up for Cameroon, a citizens' initiative launched in 2016 by four political parties (Cameroon People's Party, Union des Populations du Cameroun, and Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun and UNIVERS), but opened to all political parties, civil society organizations and citizens who demand basic services for the people and who campaign for a democratic and peaceful transition of power, has undertaken some peace-building initiatives including:

- Written proposals to the government on how to resolve the crisis.
- Attendance to international meetings and conventions to talk about the political atmosphere in Cameroon while making recommendations.
- Organization of peaceful protests.
- Organization of awareness-raising and training workshops for peace actors in the field aimed at brainstorming on current developments, at gaining diverse perspectives on the conflict and at understanding the roles of the different actors.
- Creation of a "Friday in Black" campaign to mourn and lament for those who have lost their lives during the crisis. During the "Friday in Black" campaign, partners and members of the movement are expected to be dressed in black, a colour that signifies mourning and grief.⁶⁵

The Denis Miki Foundation, an organization operating in Limbe, has initiated a peace initiative on Digital Rights and Security. The project is aimed at fighting hate speech, cyber bullying and sexual harassment of women online. This initiative recognizes the role which social media has

62 <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-women-stage-protest-call-end-anglophone-crisis/>

63 <https://www.facebook.com/SNWOT/videos/967186466825139/>. Additional information on the campaign is available at: <https://snwot.org>

64 <https://snwot.org/position-paper-on-the-anglophone-crisis-in-cameroon>

65 <https://mimimefoinfos.com/stand-up-for-cameroon-intensifies-black-friday-campaign-to-kick-out-president-biya/>

played in fuelling and aggravating the crisis and, therefore, aims at using social media as a tool for peace.

NORTH WEST REGION

As a result of the crisis, several civil society organizations within the region have geared their activities towards peacebuilding. Some very active civil society organisations in the region include: Mother of Hope Cameroon, Plan Cameroon, and Médecins du Monde. These actors have been able to implement projects geared towards building the capacities of youth and women in peace activism, psychosocial support and trauma healing, outreach campaigns towards supporting IDPs, peace advocacy and campaigns against hate speech. Some other measures include the creation of coalitions for peace like the South West North West Women's Task Force.

Other organizations like Sama's Care are actively involved in tending to the economic needs of IDPs within the region. Sama's Care is centered on professionalizing domestic care in Cameroon and since the beginning of the crisis, has been engaging IDPs in professional domestic work. This is done by training them as professional caregivers, house helpers and babysitters; after the training they are deployed to work in people's homes under the terms of a signed contract with a salary attached. This project has helped to employ over 200 women, young women and young men out of the region.

4.4. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF INTERVENTIONS

4.4.1. STRENGTHS

From consultations with civil society organizations and other actors in the field, some of the strengths of their interventions include:

- An increase in women's participation in peace and activism and conflict resolution processes as a result of the creation of women's coalitions. They have further brought to the limelight contributions of grassroots women to peace building processes at community levels. These coalitions have pushed for women's agenda to top decision making process such as the major national dialogue "... though not as numerically representative as we would have wanted it to be, women had a chance to be present and heard at the national dialogue, which to us

is progress in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda." (Respondent from the South west North West Women's Taskforce). "Our activities have also attracted support from international organizations who have equipped us with skills and capacity building opportunities especially for grassroots women" (member from SNWOT)

- Significant humanitarian support for IDPs. "We may not have been able to reach out to all the IDPs giving that it is a growing need, but we cannot be indifferent to the tremendous work which actors have been doing to meet this need... IDPs have been supported in their numbers..." (NGO representative).
- Creation of Partnerships, Coalitions and Networks. Participants attested that the crisis has enhanced the creation of partnerships and of synergies amongst actors on the field. This according to them depicts a positive sign of solidarity and commitment towards ending the crisis. "We have seen the creation of new networks and movements aimed at contributing to solving the crisis and this has been a strength so far" (NGO representative).

4.4.2. WEAKNESSES

Some weaknesses include but are not limited to:

- Limited funding to meet the growing needs of IDPs. Most organizations working in the area of humanitarian response attest to the overwhelming needs of IDPs on the ground with limited resources available to meet them “the needs are overwhelming... we meet very disheartening situations on the field but getting enough funding is a major challenge... it just never seems to be enough” (NGO representative)
- Lack of collaborations and coordinated actions amongst NGOs and civil society organisations, as attested by organizations present in the field, in terms of information sharing and mapping of areas of intervention. To this effect, there is a duplication of interventions in particular areas while others are left untouched. “We find that many NGOs are concentrated in a particular area. We have failed to coordinate our actions and work in synergy” (NGO representative)
- Insufficient gender-sensitive approaches in interventions. Over time, organizations have been criticized for failing to pay attention to age and gender dynamics in addressing issues around the conflict. Oftentimes, the issues of women and girls are hardly addressed. “Most interventions before now have failed to recognize the gender lens in their initiatives...” (NGO representatives).
- Peace-building initiatives within the region have most often targeted women and young people who are most affected by the crisis. It is, however, worth noting that there seems to be a limitation in these peacebuilding interventions with regards to targeting the main actors in the conflict. This gap in intervention could be associated with potential threats and insecurity should either the amba boys or the state personnel be involved in their interventions. It is common knowledge that the “Amba boys” are not open to any discussions on peace building initiatives as they quickly tag it as treason against their cause. On the other hand, there seems to be an issue of trust between government and NGOs, which hinders partnership between the two especially when it comes to issues relating to the

conflict. Given that the crisis is a sensitive issue, the government has tended to place so many bureaucratic bottlenecks on issues concerning the crisis and are not very open to any collaborations for peace initiatives.

4.5. CASE STUDY: THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON THE MBORORO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN THE NORTH-WEST REGION

A) BEFORE THE CRISES

The Mbororo Fulani pastoralists are one of the indigenous minority groups in Cameroon and constitute 12% of the population with a high concentration in the North West, Adamawa, West and East Regions. In the North West Region alone they numbered about 85 thousand and they have been living there since 1905. The Mbororo pastoralists have been living in harmony with their neighbors who are farmers despite some tensions relating to farmer-grazer conflicts in which they always come into negotiations for peace to reign. During the past years, many of the Mbororo have been victims of police harassment and illegal detention for being accused of their cattle destroying farmers' crops. Most of them have lost their cattle through attacks by farmers and also physical violence. They have paid huge sums of money as bribes to the police in order to be released from detention after being accused by farmers.

B) HOW THE CONFLICTS AGGRAVATE THE MARGINALISATION OF THE MBORORO WOMEN AND GIRLS

The crisis in the North West and South West, which has led to the burning and closure of schools, destruction of roads, private and public property, indiscriminate killings, threats, kidnapping and ransom taking, amongst others, has greatly affected the Mbororo People especially women and girls. As of October 2018, OCHA estimated there were 437,000 IDPs in Cameroon, 246,000 of them in the Southwest Region, 105,000 in the Northwest Region, and 86,000 in the Littoral and West Regions. In addition to triggering internal displacement in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon, the ongoing conflict has also forced over 35,000 Cameroonians to seek asylum in Nigeria.⁶⁶ , Amongst these IDPs and refugees are the

66 http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Cameroon%202019%20Supplementary%20Appeal%20%28March%202019%29.pdf#_ga=2.187057390.772471888.1592825360.515250466.1592825360

Mbororo.⁶⁷ The larger Mbororo people from Bui, Ngoketunjia, Momo, Boyo, Menchum and part of Donga-Mantung Divisions of the North West region, are currently seeking refuge in some parts of Mezam division, the West region, Center, Littoral, and in other parts of the country.

Mbororo women and girls are often being marginalized and discriminated against, due to cultural and traditional practices, which often prevent them from pursuing education. The situation has been aggravated by the ongoing socio-political crisis as girls have abandoned school, escaped into the bushes for safety, some migrated to other towns and some are forced to get married. Women and girls with very conservative and traditional backgrounds, such as in the Mbororo community, who had less chances to access education and have been self-reliant, often face more challenges in IDP settings without the protection of close family structures. In such situations they are at higher risk of exploitation and abuse. For instance, some Mbororo girls who leave school are forced into early marriage due to loss of livelihoods and their parents' lack of means to continue sponsoring them in school.⁶⁸ Some face early pregnancies without financial means to provide the child with basic amenities. Some of the girls who have been out of school for the past two years are gradually forgetting what they were taught to the extent of even forgetting how to write their name.

Many Mbororo girls and women still desire to pursue their education despite the prevailing crisis but they lack the means to do so. Mbororo people have been threatened, their houses burnt, cattle killed and some stolen. They fled from their settlements barehanded after their sources of livelihood had been shattered, thus making it difficult to sponsor their children in school, but will readily do so if they are given the means.

Few of the Mbororo girls who make it to school in the French-speaking zones still have a litany of challenges, which cuts across basic school needs, integration and language barriers as Mbororo people speak Fulfulde and have challenges communicating in English and French. Some of the schools with insufficient infrastructure still manage to admit Mbororo kids, according to a head teacher interviewed in Koutaba, students usually stay away from

school on cattle market days in search of food. Some Mbororo kids could not go to school due to heavy sums of money demanded by the school heads for admission.

There are risks of cholera outbreak due to the fact that some communities where the IDPs, including Mbororo, are now living have questionable sources of drinking water and toilet facilities. Cholera has a heavy impact on women and girls, including because of their role as caregivers and in fetching water. Much needs to be done in order to ameliorate these devastating effects of the crisis in respect to the education and the welfare of Mbororo women and girls. The victims are expressing the desire to go back to their various localities thus adding their voices to those of community leaders in calling on the government to advance the dialogue process and to provide adequate security.

IMPACT OF THE CRISES ON THE MBORORO FULANI INDIGENOUS MINORITY

The Mbororo peoples have suffered huge casualties at the hands of the separatist fighters in the North West region. According to human rights activists:

- 246 people killed by beheading
- 3200 injured people
- Over 2600 cattle killed or stolen
- 475 houses burnt and destroyed
- 1053 million XAF ransom paid to release kidnapped family members
- 11755 internally displaced persons including women
- 3,755 internally displaced children

Source. Cameroon Indigenous Women's Forum (CAIWOF)

67 http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Cameroon%202019%20Supplementary%20Appeal%20%28March%202019%29.pdf#_ga=2.187057390.772471888.1592825360-515250466.1592825360

68 Documentary, Impact of the Socio-political Crises on the education of the Mbororo girls in Cameroon, Cameroon Indigenous Women's Forum (CAIWOF), available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Nk0wKqmqjZYjhlzoE0hMSqn007gpdvAs/view>





SECTION 5 : GENDER CONFLICT ANALYSIS FOR WEST, LITTORAL AND CENTER REGIONS

Solidarity visit to Internally Displaced Persons from NOSO regions in Melong locality, January 05 th, 2020

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Author: Mathurin NDONGO KITIO

5.1. CONFLICT DYNAMICS

The West, Littoral and Center regions are those with the majority of host communities for IDPs from the North West and South West regions who have escaped from the war to seek refuge. The influx of IDPs creates various tensions and dynamics between IDPs and host communities. Some of these include the following:

- **IDPs are forced to resort to dangerous survival strategies and are often exploited as a result:** Due to financial constraints, many IDPs suffer when they get into new communities; they are put in extremely vulnerable positions of undertaking dangerous and activities, such as theft, selling drugs and or prostitution, to earn income for survival. Because IDPs compete with the locals for job opportunities, they are most likely to be unemployed, so they become desperate to earn a living and engage in low income and exploitative jobs. According to IDPs in the Littoral and West Regions, young girls and women sell their bodies in exchange for as little as 500 CFA Francs without the use of condoms and 300 FCFA with the use of condoms. The apparently higher price levied on sex without a condom is in a bid to compensate for the high risk associated with it.
- **Stigmatization and poor treatment of IDPs by host communities:** It is difficult to have social status in a community when you are called an IDP. This is because host communities believe that the term “internally displaced” refers to a group of people who are viewed as second-class citizens and as a result, IDPs are often treated without empathy and with intolerance. A perception from members in host communities regarding increase in crime is linked to the influx of IDPs into these communities. Also, people interviewed said that they thought that IDPs do not respect rules, customs and traditions of the host community, do not contribute to community work or development, and that some engage in, for example, prostitution and theft in farms. In some cases IDPs tend to have a sense of insecurity in the host communities as they are seen as outsiders and sometimes bullied and accused of supporting armed groups.
- **Sexual harassment and exploitation of IDP young women and girls:** internally displaced women/

girls live in insecure shelters and are at high risk of sexual violence, domestic violence and early marriages. The rise in domestic violence is linked to their intimate partners who turn to abuse them (e.g. rape, denial of economic resources, battery); outside their home, women and girls experience sexual assault and rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution and survival sex, all to earn a living and for survival.

- **Maltreatment and exploitation of IDPs by host communities:** in most host communities, resources were scarce even before the arrival of IDPs. The presence of IDPs has added pressure on already hard living conditions of the local population due to inadequate resources and an increase in resource use. As a result, some individuals and local organisations fraudulently get access to and misappropriate humanitarian assistance, which should be distributed to IDPs.
- **Poor Living/Sanitation Conditions of IDPs:** In most IDP communities in the Littoral and West Regions, IDPs live in deplorable conditions, usually in crowded, swamped or flooded areas and lack facilities like potable drinking water and suitable toilets. In order to cope with their current living conditions, they have adopted strategies such as traveling long distances to get drinking water and using nearby bushes as toilets. “I have personally trained my system such that I use a small pale⁶⁹ to defecate as early as 4am everyday and dispose of it in a nearby bush before its dawn. I have been living like this for the past two years” (IDP woman in Douala). Some others confessed that they have to dispose of the waste in running gutters.

5.2. GENDER DIMENSION OF THE CONFLICT

Like other regions, the West, Littoral and Center are highly patriarchal and consider women’s role for household, marriage, childbearing and for some social work purposes. Youth voices are also underestimated as decision-making powers lie in the hands of men. Expectations of women in these regions are very high; however, they continue to use various strategies to cope, resist, survive no matter the circumstances and, in many ways, go beyond their own individual needs to improve the lives of their female counterparts.

⁶⁹ A pale is a small bucket usually used to wash under garments

Armed conflict involves everyone, not just armed protagonists, in the risk of increased violence. That is why women, men and youth have fled from war torn English-speaking North West and South West regions to seek refuge in safer regions in which some face sometimes more challenges than in their community of origin. In host communities, adding to suffering from male dominated politics, women who came to find refuge in what they consider safe places, suffer from double discrimination. They are in very vulnerable situations and are likely to be victims of sexual violence and rape. They are also victims of stigmatization and poor treatment, including by some of their fellow women. Some suffer from exploitation by employers, who pay them below what is expected and sometimes they are not paid at all; some feel they have no choice but to engage in survival sex to make ends meet and become victims of sexual exploitation.

They, together with young people, also suffer from suspicion from host communities who attribute to them the majority of the problems arising in the community. For instance, they are blamed for the increase of prices in the markets or as causes of the high crime wave. In some instances, young people, women and men have been accused of cooperating with armed groups back at homes or in the bushes. Some IDP youths have been caught in schools with some weapons. Many women and young people find themselves providers of food and shelter for their families a role which some started playing when their husbands or parents were killed. They are therefore obliged to work much harder, be more resourceful, and to take even more physical risks to meet their family's needs.

Some internally displaced women have adapted to their new environment and have built new relationships. Some have become heads of family and primary breadwinners, something that has added further pressure on them, in some cases leading to burnout, and increased their vulnerability. They are now responsible for catering not only for themselves and their families, but also for other children or IDPs regarding the principle of solidarity. As a result, many have acquired new skills and tools to be more efficient and helpful for themselves and their families. So there are new family or social dynamics which the women have created in the new environment.

Mobility may be a key factor in personal survival. We have witnessed that some women and men with disabilities are not able to find their way with

the same ease as other people. Some women also cannot cope easily in the new environment because of pregnancy or the need to care for children, the sick and the elderly.

5.3. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CONFLICT

5.3.1. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The government has made efforts to meet some of the needs of the growing IDP population in the host communities of the West, Littoral and Center regions. Some interventions include free primary school education for IDPs in government schools and the provision to IDPs of basic necessities like food items. From time to time, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) has been giving food items to IDPs while the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), via the different delegates in regions, have been identifying IDPs in order to have statistics with the different categories and ages to facilitate efficient support measures and programmes.

5.3.2. RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES LEADING HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS

The area where the assessment meeting was held is predominantly a Christian community. Churches in these regions are playing an important role in not only receiving and registering IDPs, but also supporting them with accommodation and basic necessities like food and clothing. Churches with large congregations like the Catholic Church, the Presbyterians Baptists and other Pentecostal churches encourage their members to donate clothing, food and basic sanitary pads for IDPs in the community.

"When I arrived Dschang with my children, we attended the Catholic Church on Sunday and we were registered as IDPs... Christians have been supporting us with clothes, food and sometimes money...we feel very loved and welcomed here" (IDP women from Wum in the North West Region).

Moreover, probably due to the lack of professional services, clergy men are acting as spiritual and emotional counsellors for IDPs who are suffering from trauma as a result of their experiences back home. To this effect, pastors and priests are providing spiritual support for them and reassuring them of God's love. "When I feel depressed from all the

things I went through in Muyuka,⁷⁰ I go to my pastor who prays with me and encourages me. It makes me feel better....” (IDP from South West)

The Christ Embassy Church in Mapanda in the Littoral region is actively engaged in supporting young boys and girls with financial support to pay their school fees and also didactic material. “I came to Douala and was stranded with nowhere to live. I was referred to the Christ Embassy Church in Mapanda where the Pastor took me in the church; has supported me to pay my fees and register for my GCE exams...” (Young IDP from Bamenda)

5.3.3. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

“Centre de Formation Chantal Biya” is an organization working in the West Region to provide computer skills for IDPs to enable them to get jobs in documentation centers and open up such centers for themselves to earn a living. The main objective of this initiative is to boost the economic potentials of IDPs, targeting especially the adolescent boys and girls to reduce the risk of prostitution and armed robbery.

Recognizing the increasing rates of sexual violence with the influx of IDPs in the West region, ABDEL, an NGO working in the West, is working on a project aimed at combating gender-based violence in schools. According to reports from ABDEL, most of the young internally displaced girls in secondary schools have been subject to sexual harassment and rape in the school milieu and in the communities. To address this growing phenomenon, they have designed awareness-raising campaigns to counter gender-based violence in schools.

Reset the Mind Association is an organisation based in Douala, the Littoral Region, and works closely with the Christ Embassy Church to provide skill empowerment training for internally displaced women and girls who are hosted in churches. They train them in producing items with beads, designing with local fabrics and the production and packaging of liquid soap and honey. It also assists young people financially with school fees and other didactic material. Other interventions include: educative talks is the first main action; providing instructions and

directives on what to do and not to do in the new settlement areas, one-on-one sensitization talks with IDPs; and equipping some of them financially; engage in consultative talks with social affairs on how best to collaborate in order to effectively support the growing number of IDPs in the region.

WILPF Cameroon based in the Littoral region has carried out a gender conflict analysis captured in this report. Through this project, it has been able to reach out to thousands of IDPs in Bafoussam, Douala, Yaoundé, Ebolowa, Melong, Dschang, Buea, Kumba, and Bamenda, identifying needs and meeting some of these needs. It has covered school fees for some young people in Douala and provided ‘dignity kits’⁷¹ for internally displaced women and girls in the above-mentioned locations.

Mother of Hope Cameroon has been engaged in providing livelihood and psychosocial support for internally displaced women and girls living in the West and Center regions of Bafoussam and Yaoundé. They have been able to train over 60 women and girls with skills in beads production, hair treatment production and Ankara designing. They have also provided trauma healing and psychosocial support for women who have been direct victims of the crisis.

Cameroon Youths and students Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP), based in the Center region, has been involved in advocating with policy makers on appropriate measures of the resolution of the crisis, especially through an inclusive dialogue and raising awareness through her social media outlet on the fight against gender-based violence, hygienic precautions and the need for provision of humanitarian assistance especially sanitary kits to internally displaced girls and women.

The Network for More Women in Politics, based in the Center region, has been active in providing support to the victims of conflicts, through training, coaching and personal development. It also works in strong partnership with WILPF Cameroon in the implementation of some peace initiatives such as “the voice of women in the national dialogue” and the present study on “Gender analysis in conflicts in Cameroon”.

GRIOTE TV is the first 100% female Web Tv in sub-Saharan Africa whose work is focused

⁷⁰ South West Region

⁷¹ Dignity kits contain hygiene and sanitary items, as well as other items explicitly tailored towards the local needs of women and girls of reproductive age in particular communities.

on gender-sensitive subjects and particularly on women, peace and security issues. Their actions in relation to conflict in Cameroon involve articles on various conflict situations, especially highlighting its impact on women. GRIOTE has also produced, at the request of WILPF Cameroon, a 26-minute documentary and mini documentaries on the experiences, stories and testimonies of victims of the Anglophone crisis.

5.4. KEY GAPS IN INTERVENTIONS

While building partnerships and coalitions to address the needs of internally displaced persons has been a key strength in the interventions conducted in the region, significant gaps remain:

- Limited funding to meet the overwhelming and growing needs of IDPs.
- Lack of coordination between organizations working in the field. "Sometimes many organizations support particular groups repeatedly while others have never been helped." (NGO representative)
- Inadequate support from the government. "Most often, the government regards civil society organizations as threats instead of partners... there is a growing tension between these two factions".
- Exploitation of IDPs by some organizations, which has built a resistance of IDPs towards genuine endeavors. Some IDPs reported that many NGOs had come, taken pictures, made certain promises that were never met; that these NGOs benefit from the interaction with the IDPs but that this does benefit the IDPs who feel that NGOs take advantage of the situation for their own benefits.

5.5. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

5.5.1. MENTAL HEALTH

In these host communities, it is common to hear IDPs saying that they are suffering from trauma resulting from hearing a series of gunshots from kidnappings and general tension. "When soldiers come into the village, the sign of their arrival is massive gunshots" (IDP women from the South West). "I still find it very difficult to forget the sound of the gunshot. Even now that I am in another town, I get very upset by any sound resembling that

of a gunshot." (IDP from Dschang) Teachers especially shared their experiences of working with students and pupils who become reserved and fail to interact with others as a result of trauma. "Many of these children coming from the conflict regions have issues integrating; they tend to be reserved while others tend to be very aggressive" (Primary school teacher from Bafoussam).

Another aspect which came out strongly from discussions with community members and actors was that of psychological and mental health consequences of violent and traumatic experiences such as symptoms of Acute and Post Traumatic Stress Disorders: Teachers and civil society organisations workers cooperating with survivors and community members in conflict areas or in IDP settings have described that the majority of people and, in particular, survivors of gender-based violence, victims of kidnapping and children from conflict areas present and share a wide range of typical trauma symptoms. Teachers are very concerned about how the mental well-being of people coming from conflict areas reflects in schools. "We need a lot of psychosocial support, there is so much anger in the air." (NGO worker) "Everybody is mentally sick! there is a lot of aggression, anger and shock... there is shooting in front of my house... it is too much to see others shot." (mother of 4 children from the North West in Bafoussam).

5.5.2. EDUCATION

There are major challenges in schools in these host communities: here are insufficient infrastructural developments to accommodate the growing number of IDPs in schools; students and pupils are expected to sit in very uncomfortable positions to study because of lack of space; one teacher is expected to teach more than one hundred students in one class.

Moreover, violence is on the rise in these schools hosting IDPs from the conflict affected regions. Giving that the background from which they come from is complex, their interaction with other students becomes a challenge. Internally displaced students tend to react violently especially when they are provoked by other students. This situation gets worse especially because schools do not have professionally trained psychosocial support providers to handle such issues. "Most students are shaken by the least incident on campus.... they need serious counseling and psychosocial support" (Headmistress of a primary school in Dschang).

5.5.3. SECURITY

Based on findings from the field and focus group discussions, there is a perception that the level of crime and insecurity has doubled with the influx of IDPs. Theft is on the rise and prostitution has increased on the streets. "Some of us do not feel safe anymore... there are a lot of strange people around and nobody knows who is who" (Woman from the West).

5.5.4. ECONOMIC

Increased Cost of Living; Women face a major challenge in the high prices of goods and food commodities in the host communities. Because women are primarily responsible for feeding the family, they face challenges in meeting the gap in prices of goods. "It is not easy for us to feed so many mouths in our homes because the prices here are nothing compared to those at home. Back at home we had our farms and gardens where we harvested food for our families, have absolutely nothing and have to buy everything. It is so sad that our crops are rotting away in our farms back home while we die of hunger here..." (IDP woman from Lebialem in the South West Region). As a result of economic hardship, women attested to the fact that 600 XAF was too much for them to spend on buying sanitary pads monthly. They would rather save the money in order to provide food for their children and use old clothes in the place of sanitary pads.

Employment Issues: Men who are settled in the West region as IDPs find it difficult to find something to do to feed their families. Most often, people are not willing to employ them for fear of them being Amba boys and for security reasons due to suspicion, as they do not know the people, what their views are etc. For those who manage to get occasional jobs like cleaners' security men and or sales boys, they are often exploited by their employers who pay them below what is expected. The lack of employment has led many of such young men to become armed robbers and pickpockets on the streets. "I have been here for over a year and it has been so difficult for me to kind a permanent job. It is so frustrating." (young IDP)

5.5.5. IDPs IN HOST COMMUNITIES

Women expressed worries about the way some men and women from the West treated them with disrespect and disregard. Provoking and insulting them and their children at every given opportunity. They face such situations

from neighbors, petty traders in the market and even at public taps and hospitals. "When we try to bargain prices in the market, they insult us and call us les Bamenda and tell us to go away if we don't have money to buy..." (IDP woman from the North West) "Each time I leave the house, the neighbor beats my children at the slightest provocation, saying they are too noisy" IDP woman from South West). These women are not given the chance to also carry out petty trading in the markets to earn a living with their families. Oftentimes, other women are not willing to rent or lead out their spaces to IDP women. "Once I tried to start a petty trade at a spot in the market but the lady selling next to me asked me to leave and never come back" (Woman from the South West Region).

According to IDPs living in Makepe, most of their landlords do not permit them to lay their dead relatives in state (i.e. for viewing before their burial so that people can come and pay their respect) in their premises before burial. They often face challenges regarding where to bury their loved ones who pass away because they cannot go back home to bury them as a result of the crisis. They have to pay the sum of 50.000 XAF (about 85 USD) and sometimes more before they can bury them in a public cemetery.

5.5.6. LANGUAGE BARRIER

Most IDPs who come from English-speaking regions find it difficult communicating effectively with locals of the West who speak French. Women in particular face this challenge as they have to buy goods from the market, enrol their children in school and sell their items for those doing petty businesses. This further intensifies sentiments of alienation. Girls and boys after having been out of school up to two years have to adapt in classes with younger students. Being older and often not speaking proper French sometimes makes their integration very difficult. Often, the loss of documents and of birth certificates as well as the lack of information on where to get these documents can be an obstacle to get services and support. Language problems when interacting with public services or accessing public services.

5.5.7 EXPLOITATION OF IDPs

i) By Employers

One common dynamic which cuts across most host regions is the exploitation of IDPs by employers. According to IDPs interviewed, they

work under unfavorable conditions for salaries which are not commensurate to the work done. "Whatever is offered, as pay, we are forced to accept because we don't have a choice and these employers take advantage of our vulnerability...." (IDP from Yaoundé). The IDPs attested that sometimes they go for months without being paid "I worked as house help for four months but my employer paid me only for two months ... I had to abandon the job and look for something else to do" (IDP from Dschang).

ii) By Family Members

As the crisis intensifies with a continuous ban on schools by the separatists, parents have devised new ways to make sure their children get an education. It is therefore common for parents who cannot afford to move to other towns to send their children to their family members for school. However, some relatives have tended to exploit them through their children. "I sent my daughter to Yaoundé to live with my brother so she could go to school...I provided all her needs including her fee and was given the impression that she had been duly registered only to learn later on that she was not in school all of that year" (IDP from Yaoundé).

Sending their daughters to extended family members in order to enable them to attend school, sometimes implies a high risk of abuse and sexual abuse. Girls interviewed as part of this study reported not having any contact with other people in the area and due to limited money, they often do not have phone credit to call family members. Sometimes they are used as domestic workers without being paid.

iii) By Public Figures

Following discussions with IDPs in Makepe Misoke, a neighborhood in Douala, IDPs attested to have been exploited by a traditional chief. According to them, the chief sent out announcements to all IDPs in Makepe saying that the government was coming to support them through him. In response to this, they all gathered in his palace in numbers and were asked to write down their names in a register. He later instructed them to tell whoever came to talk to them that he had been housing and feeding them and their children for three years since they fled from the crisis regions. He assured them that respecting his instructions was the only way help would come to them. He invited a TV station to his palace where a documentary was made on the situation of the IDPs based on what he asked to say. "Chief asked me to say on camera that my husband was shot by the military in our village...he

promised to take me and three children to America if I did what he said and I did... upon watching the documentary which went viral, my husband has abandoned me and the children... we have not heard from him for months." (Young IDP from Makepe). "He asked me to say that my leg was shot in a crossfire in our village... I refused telling him that I have always been a disabled from birth... he got angry and told me never to return to his palace." (IPD with disabilities) "Each time people brought food items or money to support us, he never gave us anything... we received mattresses and food donations severally but he kept them all to himself" "He asked us to bring our children to spend the night in his palace so that Equinox TV could capture them as proof that he was housing us".

iv) By NGOs

There were some allegations that some unscrupulous organizations have exploited the vulnerability of IDPs to get funding which never benefits the IDPs. "Some organizations come here and take pictures of us promising to support us but never come back". (IDP from Bafoussam.)

5.6. CASE STUDY: FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

One focus group discussion was organized in each region. Participants included civil society organisations, community members, victims and IDPs.

When asked who they thought were the perpetrators of violence, internally displaced women in the Center and Littoral regions explained that non-state armed groups were fighting to protect them and only responded in violent ways when provoked by the military. According to most of the women, the military constituted a nuisance especially in the communities. They attested that it was the military burning down their houses harassing them on their way from the farm. "We could no longer go to our farms because the military shoot at anybody they see on the streets... many women have lost their lives as a result these shootings" (IDP women from North West) The young men also shared a similar opinion about the military as they explained that the military carried out random and arbitrary arrests and suspected young men to be amba fighters or spies. "My brother was arrested and detained by the military for months because he was suspected of being an amba supporter" (Internally displaced boy from South West).

However, other IDPs living in Douala were of

the opinion that it is difficult to tell who exactly is responsible for the violence and killing. According to them, it was the military sometimes while other times it is the amba fighters. They however confirmed that they were more terrified of the non-State armed group than the military. "I am more afraid of the "Amba Boys" than the military...my uncle was kidnapped by them and was severely beaten because he is a teacher... his fingers were chopped off..." (Young woman from southwest). They also explained that the situation has become worse with different amba groups cropping up every day representing different villages. "We do not know who is who.... different groups keep asking us to give them money for support...I have personally given money more than five times to different groups who come to my store demanding for support... each time I tried to explain that I had given money to some other group, they threatened to shoot me" (man from Bamenda).

Participants in Littoral explained that most of the boys parading themselves as "Amba Boys" demanding support were thieves trying to extort money from civilians. A major concern in the ongoing conflict is that it is hard to identify who the "Amba Boys" are. In the absence of a clearly-defined structure or internal hierarchy/ centralised power, different groups with highly diverse interests are making claims to being "Amba Boys" and acting with the power that identifying with such a term renders to the actors. This plays into the general atmosphere of distrust as the population is now wary of each other as they are not sure of who is who. They further explained that, once the real Amba Boys got wind of the fake "Amba Boys," they arrested them and punished them by sometimes chopping off some body parts.

When asked what challenges local civil society organizations faced in dealing with the needs of IDPs in their region, they explained that the major challenge was getting funding to meet the pressing needs of IDPs.

They also reported that another challenge they face on the field are bureaucratic bottlenecks that hinder their work. They gave the example of some IDPs living on the street, with no identification papers whatsoever. "The worst is that the government has failed to address the housing needs of these IDPs but the police go about arresting and detaining them for lack of identification. We are currently following the cases of six internally displaced young women who have been detained for 4 months" (a female lawyer representing an NGO).

According to further discussions with IDPs living in Melong, individuals of good will have been

of enormous help to them and their children. An anglophone philanthropist who has lived in Melong for 38 years has since the beginning of the crisis opened the doors of not only his home but his businesses to IDPs coming from Lebialem from where he hails. With the growing number of IDPs and the need for their children to continue their education, he and some other people of goodwill started a primary school hosting 450 pupils with the majority of teachers who had fled from the conflict regions and settled in Melong for safety.

IDPs from the West in further discussions also attested to the fact that one major challenge which they experience are the constant threats from the Amba boys back at home demanding that they come back to join the fight. This is especially true for young men between the ages of 18- 25 years. "When I finally left my village for the West, I received several calls from the Amba boy warning me to come back home and join them to fight. They said I was a traitor for abandoning the fight.

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To deal with the situation, some of them had to change their phone numbers completely to avoid such threatening calls. However, each time they had to go home for one reason or another, the Amba boys ensured that they paid some sums of money termed "fines" for abandoning the cause. The major challenge associated with not being able to go back home as the IDPs said is the fact that their access to opportunities are limited. They are unable to register for public exams commonly referred to as "concours" because they cannot get a certificate of non-conviction which is a requirement to sit for such exams given that this must be granted only at the court of their places of birth.

In conclusion, the participants confirmed that they were skeptical about establishing new birth certificates for their children in the host communities because they did not want to have what they termed as "French Nationality".



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SECTION 6 : GENDER CONFLICT ANALYSIS FOR THE SOUTH CLUSTER

The South region is not undergoing armed conflict, but its apparent stability does not guarantee long-term tranquility either, as the regions that are in crisis at the moment were once also peaceful. The South region is a cosmopolitan region and the harmonious coexistence of different ethnic groups requires efforts to maintain cohesion. The region is not in direct geographical proximity with the areas of the country, such as the North-West and South-West, facing crises, but, like all other regions, it is indirectly affected by the various current crises, including as a result of the influx of IDPs. This region is confronted with multiple challenges, some of which are specific to it.

6.1. CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Trans-border tensions with neighbouring countries, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Cameroonian nationals who illegally enter these countries are regularly expelled for irregular migration and have to be provided with accommodation and food before being sent to their cities of origin. Border tensions are due to migration and the search for opportunities in neighbouring countries. Young people believe that it is easier to make money on the other side of the border, but they are very often expelled.

Ethnic and political conflicts:

Administrative, traditional, political leaders and elites have promoted the idea according to which natives of the South region are all supporting the President. This idea was exacerbated during the electoral period with hate speech, discriminatory language,⁷² intimidations and, sometimes, assaults on populations from other regions.⁷³ According to persons interviewed in the region, there is a general perception by local people that the President of Cameroon being from the region is a reason for superiority over other ethnic groups. During the February 2020 municipal and legislative elections, political opposition faced barriers in campaigning thus creating frustrations for supporters of these parties living there.⁷⁴ Hate speech on ethnic grounds and political affiliation is recurrent and people from other

regions, particularly the West, have always been accused of supporting opposition parties⁷⁵. They are discriminated against and made to feel not welcome in the South. This situation is conducive to leadership conflicts among traditional, political and religious leaders that create much division within the population. For instance, a civil society organisation leader reported that some traditional leaders in the region because of their clear support for the ruling party, treat cases differently depending on whether the person in question is a supporter or not of the ruling party. The idea of invulnerability due to belonging to the President's region and ethnic group generally characterized by the expression of supremacy has been the major cause of political and ethnic conflicts, often manifested by tribalism, and hate speech.

Inter-generational conflicts: The South has a long tradition of bureaucracy, clientelism, and many administrators (e.g. ministers, directors of companies, governors) come from that region. The problem is precisely this long tradition, because, according to the youths and administrative authorities interviewed in the South, the elites have created no opportunities for emancipation for the younger generations. This is at the root of tensions that are often very acute, as it was the case with the October 2019 riots in the town of Sangmelima, which also took the form of interethnic violence.⁷⁶ These riots have been triggered by the murder of a local young Bulu man who would have been killed by someone from the Bamoun ethnic group⁷⁷. The Secretary General of the Governor's Office for the South said on this matter: "it is not only a matter of inter-community conflicts, as some have presented it, but rather the expression of young people's disappointment with their elites."

- **Land-related conflicts:** Persons with disabilities, widows, people living in poverty, indigenous people, and other persons in vulnerable situations at various points face land grabbing by the rich and privileged and face serious obstacles in seeking access to justice. Another dimension are the conflicts of interest between the population and the public authorities in the management

72 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/CameroonCrisis.aspx>; https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/10/22/presidentielle-au-cameroun-et-a-la-fin-c-est-encore-biya-qui-gagne_5372943_3212.html

73 See WILPF Cameroon's report on election monitoring <http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Final-report-2018-election.pdf>

74 <https://www.dw.com/en/cameroon-elections-a-vote-marked-by-violence-and-abstention/a-52304640>;

75 Belinga Joseph-Marie Zambo, "Démocratisation, exacerbation, régime identitaire et rivalités ethniques: Le cas du Sud-Cameroun", *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement* Vol. 27, No. 1/2 (2002), pp. 175-204

76 <https://actucameroun.com/2019/10/17/emeutes-de-sangmelima-les-bamoun-organisent-une-manifestation-massive-a-yaounde/>; <https://www.journalducameroun.com/cameroun-situation-toujours-tendue-dans-la-ville-de-sangmelima/>

77 <https://actucameroun.com/2019/10/17/emeutes-de-sangmelima-les-bamoun-organisent-une-manifestation-massive-a-yaounde/>

of compensations as people are often excluded from compensation processes. There are also reports of misappropriation of land by elites and authorities and that some authorities abuse their power and do not compensate land owners as they should. These conflicts are also associated with expropriation and related corruption due to public works. A teacher working in a private school confirmed that in the Ntem Valley Division, “populations including women were expropriated from their land because of public work for the extension of electric network from the Memvele Dam. They have never received compensation and nobody is there to assist in getting their rights respected.” Land problems, usually due to the abuse of the powerful, affect women and people in vulnerable situations, such as people with disabilities, who are unable to seek justice. “Land conflicts in particular are a time bomb that if nothing is done for their regulation, the South Region will experience a land war.” (A woman from focus group discussion). Women’s inheritance was also raised as an issue by women during a focus group discussion in Ebolowa. These women recommended that men should establish marriage certificates and make legalized wills to enable women’s access to land and to avoid more intra-family disputes.

- **Tensions between host communities and IDPs:** The crises in the South West and the North West have resulted in the influx of thousands of refugees and IDPs in the South region. This creates difficult coexistence as IDPs are accused of being the cause of the suffering of the people in the South population of that region, and mistrust does not make it easier for the authorities to integrate them into the community: “Conflicts originating from other regions (particularly the North-West and South-West) are perceptible in the South with approximately 3000 IDPs, most of whom are pupils... The major difficulty here is the reluctance of these displaced people to be identified”, said the Secretary General of the Governor’s office of the South region.
- **Intrafamily disputes:** According to the Ministry of Social Affairs Chief of Service, during the year 2019, “there are approximately 9,000 cases of conflicting situations of all kinds that have been submitted to their institution in the South region.”

The most recurrent cases concern intra-family disputes, most of which related to disputes relating to the duties and responsibilities of parents, whether in married couples or de facto unions. For example, when parents and children do not agree on how to live together, younger people have different ways of thinking with which parents often do not agree, or the mother gets blamed for her young daughter’s pregnancy, with the father accusing her of not educating her well about what girls should and should not do. There are also cases of women complaining that husbands do not take care of children and other family duties or that men do not allow their wives to work. Moreover, from the interview with the MINAS Chief of Service, it appears that some 4 out of 5 girls give birth out of wedlock with no financial support from the fathers of their children. Most often, the parents of the girls raise these children and this puts these parents — who are generally poor — in greater financial difficulty. While early pregnancies are an issue common to several regions of the country, what is specific to the South region is that the parents of the girls, generally poor, seek to keep a good image of the family by looking after these babies and bearing the tensions resulting from that situation. This results in a constant intrafamily conflict between parents and their daughters.

6.2. GENDER DIMENSION OF CONFLICT

Intra-family disputes:

Women contribute to intra-family conflicts too; for example, some women verbally abuse their husbands. However, women also suffer disproportionately from the impacts of those conflicts. Moreover, many women are not legally married, and, thus, cannot inherit the land from their deceased husbands. Girls are also discriminated against with regard to inheritance, since a parent who leaves property to his children rarely takes the girl into account, because he considers that she will go into marriage. Inequalities in the enjoyment of their rights to land are some of the recurrent issues about which women complain.

Women in communities in the South region are not generally involved in decision-making; this is largely due to the weight of tradition, which holds them back. However, The MINAS’ representative stated that in administrative structures such as theirs, social action services located in places such as courts, police stations, prisons, women are actors in the search for solutions to the conflicts raised. These services greatly help to

bring back understanding into households, and even to approach with confidence complaints about of threats, false accusations, intimidation, rape, sexual exploitation and harassment.

Land-related conflicts:

According to the exchanges with women (focus group discussion in Ebolowa), they are excluded from access to land. The barriers to access to their rights are at least of three kinds:

- Poverty and ignorance: Some women say they do not know that they can complain, or where to complain. They have the idea that justice requires money they do not have. As a result, they resign themselves by devoting the few resources they have to feed their children.
- Barriers to access to justice: The procedures, from the women's point of view, are made for people who have time and money. In addition, corruption means that a complaint can only be accepted if money is occasionally paid out. It has also emerged that the fact that there are more men than women in the chain of justice, which is another discouraging factor, although one must start with the traditional chief, who is usually a man.
- Disqualification from inheritance: Women have come to ask WILPF Cameroon to advocate for their husbands to arrange marriages with them, and leave clear statements in their wills about their rights to dispose of their land.

Ethnic/political conflicts

Here (as a peculiarity of the region) women as such are generally not particularly categorized in terms of hate speech because of their ethnic background. Nevertheless, there have been reports of insults that girls and women from the South receive from nationals of other regions, in particular that they are treated as "frivolous".

Trans-border conflicts related to immigration

Emigration is not characterised mainly in terms of sex, but rather in terms of age as young people are the vast majority to emigrate. Among youth who emigrate, the proportion of boys is higher. A young man who was expelled from Equatorial Guinea, told us that prostitution often allows some girls to escape expulsion, if only for a short time. Women who have emigrated to such countries are thus often stigmatised as there is perception that they might have resorted to prostitution.

Stigmatization of IDPs in Host Communities

Women expressed worries about the way some men and women from the West treated them with disrespect and disregard. Provoking and insulting them and their children at every given opportunity. They face such situations from neighbors, petty traders in the market and even at public taps and hospitals. "When we try to bargain prices in the market, they insult us and call us les Bamenda and tell us to go away if we don't have money to buy..." (internally displaced woman from the North West) "Each time I leave the house, the neighbor beats my children at the slightest provocation, saying they are too noisy" (internally displaced woman from South West). These women are not given the chance to also carry out petty trading in the markets to earn a living with their families. Oftentimes, other women are not willing to rent or lease out their spaces to internally displaced women. "Once I tried to start a petty trade at a spot in the market but the lady selling next to me asked me to leave and never come back" (Woman from the South West Region).

Increased Cost of Living; Women face a major challenge in the high prices of goods and food commodities in the host communities. Because women are primarily responsible for feeding the family, they face challenges in meeting the gap in prices of goods. "It is not easy for us to feed so many mouths in our homes because the prices here are nothing compared to those at home. Back at home we had our farms and gardens where we harvested food for our families, have absolutely nothing and have to buy everything. It is so sad that our crops are rotting away in our farms back home while we die of hunger here....." (IDP woman from Lebialem in the South West Region)

6.2.1. HEALTH

The conflict in the North and South West Regions has resulted in far-reaching health problems especially amongst the inhabitants of rural communities, which are most affected by the war. Tens and thousands of the vulnerable population living in rural communities are now living in the bushes with a deteriorating health situation. Access to health facilities has become difficult either because roads are blocked or because of lack of financial resources to pay the bills. "My

mother died from a protracted illness because of the last ten days lockdown which blocked all roads leading to the health center..." (Young woman from Wum in the North West).

Women, girls and children living in bushes suffer from skin diseases, heart palpitations and venereal infections. Children are malnourished and suffer from malaria resulting from mosquito bites in the forest where they sleep without treated mosquito nets. A large percentage of births are now done through traditional methods especially for women living in the bushes. Reports have shown that more than 40% of clinics and health care centers no longer provide vaccinations, because the bushes are inaccessible to health personnel whose lives are at risk because of the fighting between the military and non-state armed groups.⁷⁸ Due to the high level of violence, sexual and gender-based violence, kidnapping and the absence of education, women carry a double burden caring for the family and responding to fear and psychosocial needs of family members and in particular of children.

Adults and children have often witnessed or been subject to violence and abuse; many of them are traumatized without having the opportunity to recover or to get psycho-social support due to the ongoing character of the humanitarian crisis and the lack of services. The combination of unmet basic needs, the loss of income, the increase of care duties, the limitation of education and health services, and the stressful and traumatizing conditions with permanent fear has an impact on the psychological wellbeing of women, children, families and professionals working in this area. In particular local NGOs and their female staff, who have always a double job by caring for their families and providing services, express their high level of stress and exhaustion.

6.2.2. SECURITY/ SOCIAL EFFECTS

As concerns security, there is a general atmosphere of tension and insecurity in the South West Region. As a result of the constant and rampant gunshots, arbitrary arrests, indiscriminate killings, assaults and kidnappings, the population lives in constant fear.

Women are unable to go to their farms for fear of being attacked, maimed, or kidnapped. Crops have been abandoned by women who have had to flee for safety from their communities to other towns. This situation presents a threat to food security in the days ahead, since rural women cultivate 90% of food for urban areas and big

cities. The sudden movement to other towns for safety exposes these rural women to further economic vulnerability, as they are left wanting with no source of livelihood. "I ran away from my village in the middle of the night abandoning my farms with all the crops in it... here we can barely afford three square meals a day" (Displaced woman from Kom Village).

Women in groups' discussions have reported that harmful practices, such as breast ironing, are being carried out as a strategy to prevent sexual violence against girls in the present conflict situation. Since adolescent girls become victims of rape, older women have resorted to ironing girls' breasts in order to prevent breast from developing and, thus, prevent girls being sexually abused.

As a result of the changing dynamics of the conflict, gender roles have also changed especially within impacted communities. Older women who are left back in rural communities now perform burial rites for the dead in the absence of men who have been killed in numbers or who have fled to other areas for safety. Old women are seen digging graves and burying people, a role that had been traditionally reserved for men.

Young men and on the other hand have become more susceptible to arbitrary arrests by the state military, on the one hand, and to being coerced into joining the non-state armed group on the other. "My son was arrested by the military on his way back from visiting a friend at about 8pm... nobody is safe these days..." (Displaced woman from Muyuka). "I and my brother and friends had to flee from the village when we heard that the amba boys were forcing young men to join them" (Young man from Ekona-South West Region)

6.2.3. EDUCATION

Children and youth of school-going age have been out of school since the start of the crisis. Students, pupils, teachers and school institutions have become targets for separatists' fighters who have, since 2016, held hostage effective school resumption. School institutions have been set ablaze and their administrators threatened, killed and kidnapped for attempting to operate their schools.

The effect of the absence of school affects boys, girls, women and men differently. Young men and boys of school-going age are radicalized and, sometimes, forced into joining the non-state armed group as fighters; others have become

78 <https://www.msf.org/five-things-know-about-violence-cameroon>; ; <https://www.dw.com/en/medical-staff-targeted-in-camerouns-english-speaking-regions/a-45119170>; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/28/cameroon-new-attacks-civilians-troops-separatists>

involved in petty crimes within their communities, while some others have fled from the region out of fear for their safety from both the non-state armed group and the state-armed group to whom they are targets.

On the other hand, young women and girls of school-going age are now exposed to sexual exploitation and rape from both the military and the “Amba boys;”⁷⁹ This is especially true for those seeking refuge in the bushes. While some girls have fled the region, others have engaged in survival sex. Those within urban cities are now susceptible to teenage and unwanted pregnancies resulting from rape or lack of access to contraception with an increasing rate of force and early marriages.

Women have had to abandon their livelihoods in order to move to other regions to ensure that their children go to school. As an IDP woman from Bamenda notices: “We could not continue keeping our children at home indefinitely so I had to move with the children to Bafoussam so they could go to school (...), I was a hairdresser back home but I closed down my salon. My husband had to stay back because he is a civil servant.”

Men on the other hand are financially and emotionally burdened with moving their families permanently to other regions for school and safety while they stay back in the region.

6.2.4. ECONOMIC

The constant “ghost towns”⁸⁰ and lockdowns have greatly crippled the economy. Many businesses have collapsed, while some companies have had to lay off some of their workers. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), which is the biggest agro-industrial complex that grows, processes and markets tropical export crops, has been crumbled by the crisis. The CDC being a major employer within the region, the devastating effects of the crisis on it has left many men, young men, women and young women jobless. As a result of the insecurity, many CDC plantation workers have abandoned the plantations and fled for safety.

This new situation of unemployment and economic hardship has made women more vulnerable to domestic violence. Women in their focus group discussions attest to the fact that the men, who

are known to be the breadwinners of the family and who can now no longer provide for their families, tend to pour out their frustrations and insecurities on women through violent acts.

In interviews, men stated that they are also victims of emotional and psychological violence from their wives who taunt them for not being able to provide for the family. This situation has pushed most of these men to move to other regions in search of any kind of employment they can find.

6.3. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CONFLICT

6.3.1. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

According to the Secretary General of the Governor’s Office of the South region, the local administration intervenes both in the prevention (which is prioritized) and in the resolution of conflicts as a sovereign mission of the State, through decentralised services of different sectors of activity, through the support of traditional and religious authorities and through the judicial and security authorities. Each service is tasked to take specific measures regarding their missions, including to support the work of civil society organisations.

For instance, at the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Social Action Services are used for reception, orientation and advocacy to take into account the specificities of vulnerable people. The internal coordination mechanism serves as a training framework for social workers to make them capable of acting in favour of the targets. A regional Delegate at the Ministry for the Protection of Women and the Family interviewed for this study said: “MINPROFF is in line with the logic of prevention. What happens to other regions should not happen to the South”. MINPROFF tackles the root sources of conflict by raising awareness and assisting families that suffer from violence. The action is guided by the following main questions: What preserves peace? What threatens peace?”

To reduce the negative impact of major structural projects on local population and avoid violating their rights, the government affirms that victims of expropriations were compensated and/

79 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057881>; <https://www.voanews.com/africa/study-abortions-rapes-rise-camerouns-conflict-zones>;

80 The “ghost town” operations were initiated by secessionists as a strategy of protest against the government, including by closing schools and suspending economic activity: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroon-the-risk-of-crisis-of-the-anglophone-crisis-worried-the-francophones>; <https://observers.france24.com/en/20170110-cameroon-goes-quiet-operation-ghost-town-protest>; Communiqué issued by the Governor on 17 September 2018; communiqué from the Prefect of Fako restricting movements and associations in their administrative districts from 30 September to 2 October 2018

or resettled⁸¹. For example, as part of the Kribi Deep-sea Port Project in the Ocean Division, a committee to manage the compensations was set up, chaired by the Sub Divisional Officer of the Ocean Division. This Committee includes local administrations, heads of the operational Unit of the Port and the traditional chiefs of the villages concerned. The compensation and relocation of victims of expropriations were done after consultations with them and taking into account the needs they expressed. Thus, the Bagyeli and Mabi Pygmies were resettled in Lolabe, in the forest area in the south-east, near the Campo Ma'an Reserve, while the Batanga and Lyassa, who are fishermen, were given plots of land in Lende-Djibe in the north, near the coastal area.

6.3.2. LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY-LED INITIATIVES

As part of this research, we did not have access to local initiatives that address issues such as land-related issues and IDPs. There is more focus on intra-family disputes, emigration and community awareness.

6.3.2.1 RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Institutions as churches and mosques also contribute to preserving peace based on their way of doing things: "We continue to preach love, tolerance, forgiveness, life in society. We continue to resolve conflicts through dialogue... The fear of God is the beginning of peace, regardless of religious obedience. The permanent search for peace prevents the rise of conflict or violence, and in case of conflict one must seek resolution through peace. Every person beyond his social status has a spiritual basis, and peace must be cultivated even outside religion." Imam of the Great mosque in Ebolowa.

In the churches are persons who assist in the administration of church affairs often titled "Elders or Deacons" It is important to note that they are not religious leaders but act as intermediaries between the church and the community. Often times, they serve as mediators in families which have deep rootings in the church especially when conflict arise. They commonly intervene in issues like marital disputes, and conflicts between two families. However, when attempt at resolution fails, at the level of the church Elders, they have to turn to social affairs or human rights services. In the event that the latter two fail to find a satisfactory solution, recourse is made to justice though access is not easy for all. In family disputes, victims of violence do not have

the culture to complain in court because they are unaware of their rights and the procedures involved. Another reason for resignation is the prevailing corruption in this sector. That is why they prefer to report to the church or to the MINAS Social Action Service.

6.3.2.2 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Some civil society organizations endeavor to assist in solving the challenges found in the region. In the course of this project we interacted with some of them.

CARDED contributes to the advent of a peaceful community and fights against conflicts at the grassroots level. The CSO has supported and accompanied 10 Local Councils of Traditional Chiefs in the South Region in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts through ad hoc educational talks. As a result, the concepts of non-violent conflict resolution are increasingly popularized. Four traditional chiefs have been sensitized and as a result have considerably avoided physical and psychological violence.

The Cercle de Réflexion et d'Action pour le Développement Intégral de la Personne Marginalisée (CERADIP) intervenes in tensions between children with hearing impairments and their parents, in the training of young people in sign language and in the care of other people with disabilities. Its actions have contributed to familiarizing the families of people with hearing impairments with sign language, and thus, to reduce tensions; and build confidence amongst the people trained who became autonomous.

The Centre d'Information et de Formation pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CIFED). is combating child trafficking and is conducting a survey in the Ambam and Kye-Ossi area on the trafficking of young girls to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea for sexual exploitation; a report on this survey is expected. Information, education and communication on the causes and consequences of violence in families is another working area. The impact is that families are becoming aware of peaceful conflict resolution.

6.4. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF INTERVENTIONS

The strength of the interventions in the region lies in its relative stability compared to other regions where there is significant humanitarian action. Overall, the initiatives of the various actors help more in family disputes. Actions are still needed to contribute to the prevention of violence and resolution of existing tensions.

81 6th Periodic Report of Cameroon pertaining to the implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol, and the Kampala Convention, (§988-990).

The government structures with State powers work daily to care for persons in vulnerable situations. Compared to other regions, the South has not experienced armed conflicts or serious crises that have required humanitarian intervention. The State mechanisms with the support of local organizations are considered as enough - though results are not all effective - to ease the existing tensions, including addressing:

- Psychological and physical violence against women and children
- Violence related to violations of freedom of expression
- The patriarchal dictatorship at home
- Prejudices by people from other regions about women and girls from the South
- Violence linked to the discrimination of women's and girls' land rights.

The mechanisms put in place like the MINAS' Social Action Service serve to train social workers and alleviate people's suffering, but they are limited by the fact that they are not governed by a law that may allow for direct action to be requested before the judiciary authorities.

The interventions are also limited because of the poor coordination and follow up between MINAS and MINPROFF who work both for the same target i.e. women, and both structures do not have enough experts among their staff for efficient actions. Another weakness of the interventions lies in the ineffectiveness of the actions of the stakeholders, particularly the government, to resolve the problems posed in a sustainable manner. On immigration, the government, through the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education, has set up projects to promote the employment and integration of youths. But in reality, these projects are struggling to meet the needs of young people because of widespread corruption. Apart from the law to fight hate speech which has not contributed in reducing hate speech, stakeholders in the region do not see no other concrete government initiatives aiming at mitigating political/ethnic divides and tensions.

Although civil society organizations are aware of the conflicts and the challenges, they are not sufficiently equipped and funded to carry out long-term work. Religious leaders put much effort in education through awareness, even if the results are not always as expected. The Imam of the Great mosque in Ebolowa has come to affirm: "Sometimes we feel like we're preaching in the desert and it's psychologically embarrassing."

6.5. CONSEQUENCES

Oftentimes women and children bear the brunt of disrupted families. The fact that, women are primarily responsible for child bearing and rearing often places them vulnerable positions vis a vis the events which happen in the life of the child. It is common for women to be blamed for not properly raising their daughters in the event where such a girl falls pregnant out of wedlock. A typical scenario in the South region is for the father to wash his hands off the said daughter leaving her and her mother with the responsibility of raising the child with little or no financial assistance. This causes a rift at the level of the family and leads to trauma and family separation. Children from such families often end up dropping out of school and portraying deviant behaviors.

Land conflicts, related mystical practices⁸² and dislocation of families cause loss of lives and mutual trust, political, economic and social instability, extreme frustration of vulnerable people. For instance, these are people with visual impairments, people, cured of leprosy who have been cut off from original family ties because they have been uprooted and forced to be buried in leprosy host villages.

The failure to develop the wide range of land, to create opportunities for youths, the difficult access to justice, the proliferation of hate speech, etc., are putting the economic stability of communities in the region at severe risk.

⁸² It has been reported that some abused people resort to mystical practices to deal with their abusers. These practices, as far as the population is concerned, explain some strange deaths of people involved in land disputes.



SECTION 7 : COMMON AND EMERGING TRENDS ACROSS REGIONS

Working group at the meeting with the victims of the crisis in the South-West Region, Buea, November 20 th, 2019.

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Author: Guy Blaise DONGMO FEUGAP

This section analyses key issues and trends which are common in most of the regional clusters and how they play out amidst conflict. Issues discussed here include women as peace agents, gender roles, GBV, recruitment, and IDPs.

Some of the common trends emerging between regions are the following:

- **Women as Agents of Change:**

In each region, Cameroonian women are working to prevent, mediate and participate in resolving conflicts, despite the large obstacles remaining for women's effective participation in peace and security processes. Women shared the barrier to participate equally and meaningfully. In addition, the risks women and their families face for civil society action was documented. Civil society engagement in conflict response was a common trend.

- **Patriarchal Norms and Structures:**

Gender roles during crises are closely associated with constructed norms of masculinity and femininity, where men are regarded and raised as the stronger gender while women play domestic roles within communities. In several regions, the patriarchal rule at home is compounded by community and traditional norms. Women in communities are not generally involved in decision-making; this is largely due to the weight of tradition, which holds them back. However, in administrative structures such as the Ministry of Social affairs (MINAS), social action services located in courts, police stations, prisons, women are actors in the search for solutions to the conflicts raised. In the Far North, these gender expectations have led to exclusion, stigmatisation, and structural inequalities against women, which have been particularly exacerbated during the outbreak of violence.

- **Changing Gender Roles:** Gender roles are altered by conflict as some women and girls take on different roles from head of households to combatants or leading armed groups. As men and young boys are susceptible to being recruited by non-state armed groups or to being arrested by the military, most families have sent out their sons and husbands to other towns for safety. Therefore, women are now left in the villages to look after ancestral property or become heads of households. The "Queen mother" (the appellation used for women who are

leading some of the armed groups in the region) role in the North and South West Regions also illustrates the changing roles of some women.

- **Gender-Based Violence:** Another common trend across regions is the increased rates of gender-based violence, which manifests itself in different forms, but mainly through sexual violence. The case study on the impact of the crisis on the Mbororo indigenous community in the North West region highlights how Mbororo women and girls are often marginalized and discriminated against, due to cultural and traditional practices which prevent them from pursuing education. The situation has been aggravated by the ongoing socio-political crisis as girls have abandoned school and ran far into the bushes to escape from violence, some have migrated to other towns while some others were forced to get married. Often women and girls with very conservative and traditional backgrounds, who have had less chances to access education and be self-reliant, face more challenges in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) settings without the protection of close family structures. In such situations they are at higher risk of exploitation and abuse.
- **Militarising Masculinities:** With regards to the recruitment of combatants, a common trend is the recruitment of child soldiers between the ages of 15-18 years and young men between the ages of 19-25 years. This holds true for the recruitment into the "Amba Boys" armed group in the North West and South West regions as well as for Boko Haram in the North. The Ambazonia Defence Forces commonly called the "Amba Boys" is a non-state armed group fighting for secession and independence of the two English speaking regions of Cameroon, to establish a country that would be called "Ambazonia". Poverty, youth unemployment and economic hardship, which greatly affect men and boys are common reasons why they are targeted for recruitment into armed and terrorist groups. Former Boko Haram members interviewed have been paid around 400,000 XAF (approximately 661 US dollars, which is almost two times the base rate salary for the highest paid civil servant in Cameroon) for each person recruited into the ranks of Boko Haram. This represents a significant revenue source and creates massive economic dependence for unemployed youth to

be part of the Boko Haram insurgency. Normative ideas of masculinity that manhood equals to fighting and providing for the family have also been significant factors in the recruitment of boys and men, especially in a context where properties have been destroyed and unemployment is at its peak.

- **Fragmented and Gender- Gaps in Humanitarian and IDP Responses:**

Across the regions, GCA includes information received on the work of various actors and activities. Basic needs from food, potable water, and sanitation, hygiene (WASH), shelter, electricity services are still lacking in conflict affected communities. Fragmentation highlights that better coordination is required to serve the populations. In addition, across the regions, the specific challenges facing IDPs emerged. For example, there is a lack of identification documents of IDPs which affects their ability to be fully reintegrated into society. Some young women shared how losing their documents and academic certificates as a result of their homes being burnt down during the war, find it very difficult to secure employment in any formal structure.

- **Abuse of Power and Demands for Accountability:**

Cameroonians of all regions demand more accountability of the Government and an end of human rights abuses by all actors. Specifically, in the North West and South West, the military constitutes a threat to the communities. It was attested that the military burnt down houses and harassed civilians: "We could no longer go to our farms because the military shot at anybody they see on the streets...many women have lost their lives as a result of these shootings" (IDP women from North West). The GCA account the experience of two women from Bamenda who stated "We feel so traumatized each time we see the military parading our neighborhood with guns in their frightful attire... they are everywhere, in the markets, on our way to our farms around our homes...sometimes we cannot go out and our crops end up rotting in the farms..." (Two women from Bamenda-North West). The lockdown of schools by the non-state armed forces must be urgently addressed to reduce the risks of exploitation, sexual exploitation and radicalization of young people. There must also be measures put in place to

ensure that school infrastructures, which had been destroyed, be rebuilt and a safe environment for students and teachers. Land-related and agro-pastoral conflicts, usually due to abuse of power by decision makers, who are most often men, at different levels affect disproportionately women and vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities. These marginalised groups are often unable to seek justice for example because of the lack of a property title due to discriminatory inheritance legislation and practices. Women's right to inheritance was, for instance, raised by women during a focus group discussion in Ebolowa. Women recommended that men should establish marriage certificates and legalize wills to enable women's access to land and to avoid more conflicts: "Land conflicts in particular are a time bomb that if nothing is done for their regulation, the South Region will experience a land war."

- **Trust Deficit:** Concerns were also raised about the very significant deficit of trust at multiple levels; within and between families, villages, communities and regions; within and between hierarchies of governance from local community based leadership to national government; and finally with external actors including Cameroonians living in the diaspora, neighbouring and negotiating countries like Nigeria and with former colonizers like Britain and France.
- **Trauma:** The impacts of the ongoing armed conflict in the South West and North West raise specific challenges, which must be addressed with gender responsiveness. Trauma, in various forms, and the prevention of re- traumatization and access to psychosocial support including for IDPs remains a significant challenge, which requires resourcing and commitment.





SECTION 8 : RECOMMENDATIONS

Solidarity mission to Bafoussam, with a stopover in Makenene, September 29th, 2019

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Author: Donald NGUEPI

Adding to the women's demands, WILPF Cameroon and the Platform for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education identify a set of recommendations for how local, national and international actors may support, promote, and protect gender in decision-making in Cameroon during and after times of conflict, and that, in the follow-up of the GCA, will be included in a monitoring and evaluation analysis.

A. BASIC NEEDS

To the government

1. Commit urgently to ensuring **basic needs** by designating a governmental authority at the local level in the conflict-affected regions to be responsible for the procurement, provision, and maintenance of food, potable water, and sanitation, hygiene (WASH), shelter, electricity services;
2. Direct existing governmental agencies responsible for labor and social security related issues to take specific measures and action to **ensure immediate economic opportunities and high employment rate**, for populations at risk in particular, to regain their livelihoods and new economic activities, especially in the border areas (e.g. Adamawa, North, and Far-North regions). To this end:
 - a. Ensure access to work programs, access to necessary economic input, credit and support, skills transfers, and vocational training;
 - b. Build on consultations with young people and IDPs on their employment and other livelihood needs;
 - c. Ensure income-generating activities are accessible to persons affected by the conflicts without birth certificates and similar registration documents;
 - d. Guarantee immediately the effectiveness of youth employment policies on socio-professional integration to build social cohesion between youths and their local administration.

To CSOs, humanitarian actors, international organisations, religious leaders

3. Deliver **gender-sensitive humanitarian transformative agenda** and **protection** to IDPs, refugees, and other populations affected by conflicts by implementing gender needs

assessment and producing gender-disaggregated data.

4. Address the needs of **underrepresented communities in the designing of humanitarian intervention** by taking into account the specific needs of children, IDPs, host communities, refugees, local population and the gender dimension.

To donors

5. **Allocate resources for income-generating activities** and livelihoods support to enhance socio-economic reintegration of survivors of conflicts.

B. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

To the government, parliament and the judiciary

6. Ensure urgently the human **rights of IDPs** are protected as foreseen in international, regional and national legal standards and secure inclusion of all IDPs with basic needs in the state social programs. To this aim:
 - a. Expedite the process of domesticating the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), to which Cameroon formally acceded in May 2017, and incorporate its provisions into national law and policies. Linking such law and policies to national development strategies and targets, and monitoring their implementation, can help identify solutions for IDPs.⁸³
 - b. Establish a governmental authority with the responsibility to protect and enforce the rights of IDPs and adopt and implement an effective National Action Plan on the human rights of IDPs ;
 - c. Ensure the safe and gender-responsive reintegration of all IDPs in access to education, income-generating activities, civil registration, WASH, and health (e.g. psycho-social support, sexual and reproductive health) with the support of local CSOs, international organisations, and governmental agencies ;
 - d. Hold any individual and institution accountable for human rights violations and abuses, especially with respect to the rights and protection of IDPs.

83 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IDPersons/FourPrioritiestoStrengthenProtection_16November2018.pdf

To the government

7. Ensure that **protection and assistance programs** for all IDPs, especially women and girls, led by international organisations and CSOs be incorporated into national development plans. To this end:

- a. Ensure close and effective cooperation with the IDP communities, local CSOs, international organisations, and governmental agencies in designing, coordinating, and implementing a National Action Plan on IDPs ;
- b. Set up formal mechanisms of information sharing between the government, international organisations, and CSOs;
- c. Ensure protection and assistance programs to be carried out in remote and isolated areas by setting up adequate clusters-based coordination between the IDP communities, local CSOs, international organisations, and governmental agencies;
- d. Ensure the allocation of resources by donors and government to protection and assistance initiatives, which provide sustainable assistance and protection to all IDPs.

8. Recognise the right to **basic shelter** for IDPs and refugees, and ensure that all conflict-affected populations benefit without discrimination from **durable housing solutions**. To this end:

- a. Designate as a matter of priority a governmental agency to be responsible for addressing shelter and housing needs of displaced persons and ensuring to have their opportunity to be relocated;
- b. Ensure all IDPs safe and voluntary returns to their home communities after forced displacement by setting up immediate and effective units within governmental agencies for the provision of shelter for IDPs living in host communities;
- c. Develop and implement procedures by the government with consultation and support of international organisations and local CSOs to identify and prioritise beneficiaries of basic shelter on the basis of need and vulnerability, the construction of transitional shelters, and the rebuilding of houses in return or relocation areas.

C. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

To the government, parliament and judiciary

9. Take action to **end impunity during and after armed conflicts** and hold any individual and institution, especially security actors, accountable for harmful practices including gender-based violence. To this end:

- a. Designate a government agency specifically on gender based violence, responsible for elaborating **monitoring systems of abuses** and violations related to gender-based violence in consultation with CSOs and other relevant bodies and in taking into account reports from CSOs and local communities exposed to risks;
- b. Assess systematically the **effectiveness of national legislation** related to the prevention and response to gender-based violence and put in place the provision of gender-based violence and human rights responsive mechanisms;
- c. Adopt and implement a specific law that ensures the prevention and fight against all forms of violence against women including marital rape, followed by education and public awareness programs on domestic violence;
- d. Ensure a **nation-wide awareness raising campaign** and **capacity building** on gender-based violence with the participation of all gender in different communities by interrogating the effects of gender inequality, discriminatory practices and gender-based violence during and after armed conflicts, with the involvement of the groups at risks, the government, CSOs, and international organisations in its design and implementation;
- e. Ensure the **capacity building of the state lawyers and judges** to provide adequate and necessary legal representation and counselling for the former, and to prosecute those responsible for crimes perpetrated against the survivors of gender-based violence for the latter;
- f. Strengthen the **capacity building of local community authorities** (e.g. the councils, religious leaders) under the leadership of MINAS and MINPROFF on gender-based violence response to ensure the implementation of integrated programs and services for grassroot communities;
- g. Ensure survivors of gender-based violence and of other human rights abuses and violations the **full and free access to national justice institutions**;

- h. Strengthen the **protection of the rights of women and children** by addressing legislative gaps and urgently **reviewing the provision of the Civil Code** regarding the girls' legal age of marriage at 15 years (article 52 of Ordinance No. 81-02 of 29 June 1981) and raising it to 18 years, in order to bring it in conformity with the provision on penalties for forced marriage in the Penal Code (Article 356);
- i. Ensure that statutory law prevails over customary law when it is discriminatory, especially against women.

To the government, CSOs, and health centers

10. Ensure the provision of **sexual and reproductive health education and services** for young people between the ages of 12 and 18 in order to prevent early pregnancies, child and forced marriage.

To the government, CSOs, and international organisations

11. Challenge immediately gendered power in times of war and violence with active engagement for **transforming negative masculinities** by specifically engaging men and boys in ending gender inequality, gender-based violence, and rigid ideas and socialisation practices of masculinity as key factors in the production of violence and recruitment into organised armed groups.

D. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To donors and CSOs

12. Adopt immediate stringent **monitoring and evaluation strategies** and mechanisms to ensure the impact of funded projects on beneficiaries, ensure the accountability of funds, disbursed for humanitarian projects, and prevent misappropriation and corruption of funds.

E. HEALTH CARE

To the government

13. Ensure the provisions of essential and adequate preventive health care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and access to health infrastructure for communities in conflict-affected regions. To this end:

- a. Designate a governmental agency to be responsible for providing essential and adequate preventive health care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and access to health infrastructure for

- communities in conflict-affected regions;
- b. Ensure immediately the rebuilding, rehabilitation, and equipment of health care infrastructures in all different urban and isolated areas in the conflict-affected regions;
- c. Establish clear identification procedures and mechanisms to map out beneficiaries to access health care services;
- d. Provide free access to such health care services in the conflict-affected regions on the basis of need and vulnerability;
- e. Establish urgently psychosocial support units with trained staff and experts within strategic actors (MINAS, MINPROFF, MINSANTE, CSOs, MINESEC, MINEBASE) for the provision of psychosocial care to meet the growing mental health needs of survivors of the crisis in affected regions

To the CSOs and international organisations

14. **Create social cohesion spaces** for women survivors of conflict-related violence to encourage each other and provide psychosocial support

15. **Build up a protection of protector's framework** for humanitarian actors and human rights defenders working in fragile contexts by creating a protection cluster and providing protection grants to humanitarian actors and human rights defenders at the local level;

F. EDUCATION

To the government

16. Ensure the **rebuilding, rehabilitation and equipment of educational institutions** (e.g. schools, colleges, universities) in remote and conflict-affected areas upon a ceasefire, to address the lack of education and reduce the risks of exploitation;

17. Ensure access to quality education for Mbororos and other indigenous peoples, including by providing access to education in their own language.

G. CIVIL REGISTRATION

To the government

18. Provide all persons with **equal access to basic civil registration** and free of charge including insurance of necessary documentation for registration and many other rights such as access to education, work, and health care and to ensure full access to humanitarian assistance,

even during forced displacement. To this aim:

- a. Effectively implement the universal birth registration project by, inter alia, allocating adequate resources for that purpose;
- b. Establish institutional mechanisms for facilitating documents issuances procedures in a rapid, transparent, and accessible process;
- c. Abolish birth registration and certificate issuance fees by effectively enforcing free access as provided for in the 2011 Act;
- d. Ensure IDPs the access to civil registration and the acquisition of lost civil documents (e.g. birth certificates, national identification card)
- e. Conduct information campaigns, particularly in rural areas, to inform of the overall registration procedure and encouraging parents to report births;
- f. Collect national specific system of disaggregated data on the number of people without birth certificates in collaboration with the government, CSOs, and international organisations;
- g. Strengthen the financial, technical and human resources of the National Bureau of Civil Status in order to make the access to basic civil registration more accessible throughout the territory, including, where necessary, by using mobile units to this end;
- h. Organise mobile court hearings, including in IDP camps, to facilitate the granting of substitute birth certificate judgments for populations without a birth certificate.

H. DISARMAMENT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

To the government

19. Incorporate without delay a **comprehensive and effective gender perspective** and take into account local realities⁸⁴ into the national process of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration of former combatants in the Far-North, North West and South West regions; include in the Program strict and precise mechanisms for the protection of ex-combattants from reprisals and ensure their full reintegration into society;

20. Engage in genuine and comprehensive negotiations between all warring parties to put an immediate end to armed conflicts, starting by implementing a ceasefire in all conflict-affected regions in the country. To this end:

- a. Establish without delay an inter-agency committee responsible for designing and implementing a conflict-resolution process including warring parties of the North-West and South-West armed conflict and neutral parties for the peacebuilding process (e.g. international organisations, local communities, and CSOs);
- b. Reinforce the regional collaboration between the Lake Chad Basin countries affected by the Boko Haram insurgency for implementing comprehensive regional conflict resolution mechanisms.

21. Establish without delay the **National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons** as envisaged in the law N°2016/015 of 14 December 2016 on the General Regime of Weapons and Ammunition.

I. REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES

To the government

22. Ensure an all-**inclusive bottom-up approach to peace dialogues between government and grassroots communities** protecting the rights of women, minorities, and marginalised groups;

23. Prioritize immediately an **intersectional approach** to gender, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention, where disability, age, ethnicity, class, religion, migration status, among others, interact on multiple and simultaneous levels;

24. Enhance **women and girls' representation and participation** in all peace and conflict resolution processes by implementing a **quota system of at least 30% of women** at all local, regional, national, and international levels, including in the National Dialogue and other peacebuilding committees;

25. Ensure the participation of women survivors of conflict-related violence in discussions concerning the current armed conflict and considering proposals for conflict resolution.

26. Review and reinforce without delay the concrete implementation of the **National Action Plan of the UNSC Resolution 1325** with specific commitments towards building stronger partnerships with CSOs and providing adequate funding for the monitoring and evaluation of the NAP and the **implementation of the recommendations in the GCA** as a foundation for **constitution-making process**.

⁸⁴ Involve IDPs and local communities, traditional and religious leaders in planning and implementing the DDR program

J. GOVERNANCE

To the government

27. Ensure urgently the effective **participation of decentralized local communities** and guarantee **transparency and accountability** of the government towards the population. To this end:

- a. Ensure the **effectiveness of decentralisation** by ensuring the policy and power transfer from the central government to the decentralised territorial collectivities to implement public policies and decision-making at the local level
- b. **revise the existing law on land tenure** (Ordinance 74-1 of 6 July 1974 and the following amendments thereto) in order to ensure the responsibility and capacity of decentralized territorial collectivities to adopt and implement land policies according to local specificities and to distinguish between land for agricultural activities and for pastoral activities;
- c. Ensure urgently the **protection of indigenous people's rights to lands, territories, and natural resources** by adopting a specific law on the rights of indigenous people to the existing law on land acquisition, including the preservation of land tenure of indigenous communities in the absence of land title;
- d. Create a **multi-stakeholder commission to guarantee land rights** in all conflict-affected regions and establish consultancy spaces for the communities at risks of forced evictions to access land rights information and judicial institutions

- e. Ensure a **comprehensive dialogue and collaboration** between traditional leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, representatives of political parties, and CSOs by establishing periodic meetings on cross-cutting issues at the local level;
- f. Ensure the effective implementation of the bilingualism policy by the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (CNPBM) in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in order to ensure equal treatment of the English-speaking minority and eliminate their marginalisation and discrimination in employment, education and access to legal services.
- g. Strengthen the independence and powers of the members of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism by ensuring that its members have expertise in human rights and non-discrimination.

K. HATE SPEECH

To the judiciary

28. Enforce without delay the law 2019/020 on punishing hate speech corollary to the politicization of ethnicity and ending impunity;

To the Government

29. Undertake public awareness measures to reduce inter-community tensions by promoting citizenship beyond ethnic identities and take the necessary measures to sanction any hate speech and discriminatory remarks in the public sphere.



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- . North-West Region Report:
- . West Region Report: September 2019
- . Littoral Region Report:
- . Far North Region Report: 10.09.2019

Testimonies from interviews conducted with women experiencing conflict-related violence

- . Testimonies from the East Region:
- . Testimonies from the North-West Region:
- . Testimonies from the South-West Region:
- . Additional Testimonies for South West Region:
- . Testimonies Far North region
- . Testimonies South region

Focus Groups and community meetings with CSOs, community workers and women impacted by conflict-related violence

- . Focus group discussion, Bertoua, East Region:
- . Focus group discussion, Adamawa Region:
- . Focus group discussion, South Region:
- . Focus group discussion, Far North, North-West and South-West Regions:
- . Community meeting with CSOs and IDPs, Centre Region (Yaoundé): 9.12.2019
- . Community meeting, Baptist Church, Mbingo Bafoussam, West Region: 27.12.2019
- . Community meeting, Bafoussam, West Region: 29.12.2019

Interviews with delegates of the Solidarity Mission with International Delegates, CSOs, community workers, local residents

- . Mission Report:
- . Interview with Dr. Gisela Berger, medica mondiale, Kampala, Uganda: 07.02.2020
- . Interview with Mireille N Tushiminina, Managing Director, African Development

Solutions Lab Expert, Somalia: 12.02.2020

- . Interview with Hubert Masirika Lubambo, MenEngage DR Congo: 12.02.2020
- . Interview with Riya William Yuyada, Founding and Executive Director, Crown the Woman-SS, Juba, South Sudan: 23.02.2020
- . Interview with Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Gender Analyst, National Cohesion and Integration Commission, Nairobi, Kenya: 24.02.2020

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- . Interview with local BBC Correspondent, Cameroon: 01.03.2020
- . Interview with Activist A (anonymised), Anglophone Movement, North-West Region: 14.02.2020
- . Interview with Activist B (anonymised), Anglophone Movement (in exile): 20.02.2020
- . Interview with regional journalist (anonymous), South-West Region: 24.02.2020

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- . Advocacy for the effective implementation of the relevant recommendations from the Major National Dialogue and the inclusion of women's voices in the ongoing peace process, by the Cameroonian Women's Consultation Platform, Yaoundé: 28.09.2019
- . Needs assessment meeting with CSOs and community workers, Yaoundé:
- . Second needs assessment meeting with CSOs and community workers, Yaoundé: 08.12.2019 to 15.12.2019

⁸⁵ The annexes are uploaded to www.wilpf-cameroon.org

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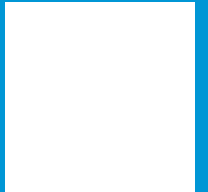
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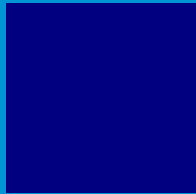
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WILPF
CAMEROON





The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with National Sections covering every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York office focused on the work of the United Nations.

Since our establishment in 1915, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.

Our approach is always non-violent, and we use existing international legal and political frameworks to achieve fundamental change in the way states conceptualise and address issues of gender, militarism, peace and security.

Our strength lies in our ability to link the international and local levels. We are very proud to be one of the first organisations to gain consultative status (category B) with the United Nations (UN), and the only women's anti-war organisation so recognised.

WILPF Cameroon was officially set up in January 2014. It was founded as a result of the increasing regional security challenges, the influx of refugees into the northern and eastern parts of the country, and the urgent need to focus on peacebuilding, demilitarisation, and women's rights. In this context, WILPF Cameroon emerged to offer a platform from which women could influence the security issues their country faces, and from which they are usually excluded.

WILPF Cameroon's mission is to contribute to social stability by building a movement of women peacemakers to end and prevent war. It aims to ensure that women are represented at all levels in the peace consolidation process, to defend women's rights, and to promote social, economic, and political justice. WILPF Cameroon is actively working on the implementation of Cameroon's National Action Plan (NAP) UNSCR 1325, as well as researching Cameroon's Gender and Disarmament and organising capacity-building workshops for authorities and civil society partners

Cameroon Section Headquarters :
Douala Cameroon

P.O Box 15766 Douala Cameroun, Feu Rouge
Bessengue,

Immeuble AZICCUL
Tel: 00 237 699 983 782 / 00 237 699867306

Yaoundé Bureau :
Rond-point Damas, face Express Union

Twitter : @wilpfCameroon

Facebook : @WILPFCameroon

Email: mail@wilpf-cameroon.org
Tél : 674162369 / 659328220

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