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Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note Cameroon: Internal relocation

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Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- The general humanitarian situation is so severe as to breach Article 15(b) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive) / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules
- The security situation presents a real risk to a civilian's life or person such that it would breach Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- A claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

Contents

Assessment	5
1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Scope of this note.....	5
2. Consideration of issues	5
2.1 Credibility.....	5
2.2 Exclusion.....	5
2.3 Internal relocation.....	5
Country information	8
3. Geography.....	8
3.1 Size, urban areas and transport network.....	8
4. Demography	8
4.1 Overview	8
4.2 Population density and distribution.....	8
4.3 Ethnicity.....	9
4.4 Religion	10
5. Economy.....	11
5.1 Socio-economic conditions.....	11
5.2 Employment	13
5.3 Social support / protection.....	14
5.4 Education	15
5.5 Food security.....	17
5.6 Housing / shelter.....	19
6. Healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene.....	20
7. Freedom of movement.....	24
7.1 Legal rights and practice	24
7.2 Security and crime situation	26
7.3 Internally displaced persons (IDPs).....	29
Terms of Reference	30
Bibliography	32
Sources cited.....	32
Sources consulted but not cited.....	34
Version control	36

Assessment

Updated: 2 December 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of this note

- 1.1.1 Whether in general those with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors can internally relocate within Cameroon.

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.

For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Internal relocation

- 2.3.1 Cameroon, which is almost twice the size of the UK, is a sparsely populated, culturally and ethnically diverse country of over 27.7 million people. More than half the population live in urban areas and over 7.5 million of the population live in the major urban areas of Yaoundé, the capital, and Douala. The population is almost 70% Christian and 21% Muslim with a small minority practising other religions or no affiliation at all. Christians are dominant in the south and west of the country, and Muslims are mostly in the northern Francophone regions and the West. The two Anglophone North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions are mainly Protestant and the five southern Francophone regions are mostly Catholic (see [Geography](#) and [Demography](#)).

- 2.3.2 Cameroon is the largest economy of the six countries within the Central African Economic and Monetary Community. It is in a strategic position on the Gulf of Guinea next to landlocked neighbouring countries with a deep-sea port and oil represents 40% of its exports. The economy is reliant on primary commodity exports (oil, timber, aluminium) and agricultural products (coffee, cocoa, cotton). Approximately 70% of the labour force is employed in the agricultural sector. Cameroon's economic growth has averaged 4.3% over the past 10 years but according to the sources used for this note, this growth has been hindered due to corruption and security threats including the crisis in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions, where there is commercial agriculture. Furthermore, the expected impact of COVID-19 is that the economy will slow or shrink in 2020 (see [Socio-economic conditions](#)).
- 2.3.3 Most workers, particularly women, are employed in the informal sector and are not protected by labour laws or the social protection scheme. There is a wage gap between men and women and underemployment disproportionately affects women and young people (see [Employment](#)).
- 2.3.4 State education is available and primary education is free and compulsory. However, enrolment rates for primary school is in decline and while UNICEF reported a growth, there is generally a low enrolment and retention rate for girls. Children in the Northwest and Southwest Regions face regular disruption to schooling due to the security crisis. Education for indigenous people is limited due to availability of indigenous languages in schools (see [Education](#) and CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#)).
- 2.3.5 Poverty rates in Cameroon are high with around 40% of the population affected largely in rural and remote areas. Of those in poverty 56% are concentrated in the northern regions. Food insecurity is a problem, particularly in conflict areas of the north, where Boko Haram incursions have displaced many people, and in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions. Insecurity, malnutrition and household livelihoods have deteriorated due to reduced food production, reduced prices in rural areas, increased prices in urban areas and decline in food consumption (see [Socio-economic conditions](#), [Food security](#) and [Security and crime situation](#)).
- 2.3.6 Basic health care for people in the North-West and South-West region is limited, the security situation has resulted in the closure of many health institutions. However, in general, people have access to a mix of public and private health care facilities, although provision is less in rural areas (see [Healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene](#) and CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#)).
- 2.3.7 There are no legal constraints on movement within the country. However, the police sometimes imposed roadblocks and check points in cities and highways in order to extort bribes and harass travellers. Armed separatists impose informal 'ghost towns' on certain days of the week, in particular on Mondays, in the North-West and South-West regions, during which movement is restricted. Curfews, as well as insecurity in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions in particular are likely to make travel difficult and unsafe in these parts of the country. Women are frequently harassed when travelling alone (see [Freedom of movement](#)).

- 2.3.8 According to the sources considered, in general a person fearing a non-state actor is likely to be able to relocate to another part of Cameroon. However, relocation may be more difficult for single women without access to support networks. Decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation taking full account of the nature of the threat from the non-state agent(s) and the individual circumstances of the particular person.
- 2.3.9 The Court of Appeal in [SC \(Jamaica\) v Home Secretary \[2017\] EWCA Civ 2112](#) held that: "the evaluative exercise is intended to be holistic and ... no burden or standard of proof arises in relation to the overall issue of whether it is reasonable to internally relocate" (para 36).
- 2.3.10 For an additional assessment of and information about particular groups see country policy information notes on [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#), [Actors of protection](#), [Background note](#) and [Sexual orientation and gender identity / expression](#) and [Female genital mutilation \(FGM\)](#).
- 2.3.11 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Archived

Country information

Section 3 updated: 2 December 2020

3. Geography

3.1 Size, urban areas and transport network

- 3.1.1 See CPIN [Cameroon: Background note](#) for details on size, urban areas, physical geography and transport network of Cameroon.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 4 updated: 2 December 2020

4. Demography

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The CIA World Factbook noted that:

‘Cameroon has a large youth population, with more than 60% of the populace under the age of 25. Fertility is falling but remains at a high level, especially among poor, rural, and uneducated women, in part because of inadequate access to contraception. Life expectancy remains low at about 55 years due to the prevalence of HIV and AIDs and an elevated maternal mortality rate, which has remained high since 1990. Cameroon, particularly the northern region, is vulnerable to food insecurity largely because of government mismanagement, corruption, high production costs, inadequate infrastructure, and natural disasters. Despite economic growth in some regions, poverty is on the rise, and is most prevalent in rural areas, which are especially affected by a shortage of jobs, declining incomes, poor school and health care infrastructure, and a lack of clean water and sanitation. Underinvestment in social safety nets and ineffective public financial management also contribute to Cameroon’s high rate of poverty.

‘International migration has been driven by unemployment (including fewer government jobs), poverty, the search for educational opportunities, and corruption. The US and Europe are preferred destinations, but, with tighter immigration restrictions in these countries, young Cameroonians are increasingly turning to neighboring states, such as Gabon and Nigeria, South Africa, other parts of Africa, and the Near and Far East...’¹

[Back to Contents](#)

4.2 Population density and distribution

- 4.2.1 The Republic of Cameroon, Presidency of the Republic undated website stated: ‘Cameroon is a country with several major towns, amongst which are Yaoundé, the political capital of the country with about one million inhabitants. Douala, which is the major economic city, has more than two million inhabitants. The other main towns are Garoua, Bafoussam, Maroua, Bamenda.’²

¹ CIA World Factbook, ‘[Cameroon](#)’ (section People and society), updated 24 November 2020

² RoC – Presidency of the Republic – website, ‘[Presentation of Cameroon](#)’, undated

- 4.2.2 A July 2020 projected estimate of the population was 27,744,989³. The population of Cameroon is concentrated in the west and north, with the interior of the country sparsely populated. As of 2020 The major urban areas are Yaoundé with a [metropolitan area] population of 3.922 and Douala with 3.663 million⁴.
- 4.2.3 Encyclopædia Britannica noted: 'More than half of the population, a comparatively high proportion, lives in urban areas. Douala, the country's main port, and Yaoundé, an important transportation and communication centre, are the country's largest cities. Other significant towns include Garoua, Bamenda, Maroua, Bafoussam, Ngaoundéré, Bertoua, and Loum.'⁵
- 4.2.4 The CIA World Factbook noted that 'Cameroon's limited resources make it dependent on UN support to host more than 420,000 refugees and asylum seekers as of September 2020. These refugees and asylum seekers are primarily from the Central African Republic and Nigeria.'⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

4.3 Ethnicity

- 4.3.1 The Republic of Cameroon, Presidency of the Republic undated website stated:

'Cameroon has more than 240 tribes which are found in three main ethnic groups; Bantus, Semi-Bantus and Sudanese. The number of national languages spoken in the country is more than 240. The most notable tribes are:

- 'BANTUS: Beti, Bassa, Bakundu, Maka, Douala, Pygmies.
- 'SEMI-BANTUS: Bamileke, Gbaya, Bamoun, Tikar.
- 'SUDANESE: Fulbe, Mafa, Toupouri, Shoa-Arabs, Moundang, Massa, Mousgoum.'⁷

- 4.3.2 The US State Department (USSD) human rights report for 2019, covering events in 2019 noted: 'The population consists of more than 275 ethnic groups. Members of the president's Beti/Bulu ethnic group from the South Region continued to hold many key positions and were disproportionately represented in the government, state-owned businesses, and security forces.'⁸

- 4.3.3 A United Nations (UN) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) July 2019 report stated:

'Cameroon is among countries that do not take into account racial or ethnic variables when conducting population census. Such data are considered less relevant and discriminatory as per the national unity and integration policy advocated in public life. That is why they have not been available

³ CIA World Factbook, '[Cameroon](#)' (section People and society), updated 24 November 2020

⁴ CIA World Factbook, '[Cameroon](#)' (section People and society), updated 24 November 2020

⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica, '[Cameroon](#)' (Settlement patterns), 2 April 2020

⁶ CIA World Factbook, '[Cameroon](#)' (section People and society), updated 24 November 2020

⁷ RoC – Presidency of the Republic – website, '[Presentation of Cameroon](#)', undated

⁸ USSD, '[Human rights report 2019](#)' (section 6)', 11 March 2020

during the last 3 General Population Censuses conducted in 1976, 1987, and 2005. This vacuum will be filled during the 4th General Population and Housing Census underway.⁹

- 4.3.4 The Freedom in the World report covering events in 2019 stated that: ‘...some ethnic minorities, such as the Bamiléké, are generally excluded from political processes, and their interests are poorly represented by elected officials.’¹⁰
- 4.3.5 The Freedom in the World report also added: ‘Discrimination against Anglophone Cameroonians and individuals from certain ethnic groups including the Bamiléké is common. The government imposes the French language in Anglophone regions, and Anglophone Cameroonians are frequently denied senior jobs in the civil service.’¹¹
- 4.3.6 Ethnic groups comprised ‘Bamileke-Bamu 24.3%, Beti/Bassa, Mbam 21.6%, Biu-Mandara 14.6%, Arab-Choa/Hausa/Kanuri 11%, Adamawa-Ubangi, 9.8%, Grassfields 7.7%, Kako, Meka/Pygmy 3.3%, Cotier/Ngoe/Oroko 2.7%, Southwestern Bantu 0.7%, foreign/other ethnic group 4.5%.’¹²
- 4.3.7 See also CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#) and [Cameroon: Background note](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

4.4 Religion

- 4.4.1 The Republic of Cameroon, Presidency of the Republic undated website stated: ‘Cameroon is a secular state. Two major religions have followers ; Christianity and Islam. Animism is also widely practised.’¹³
- 4.4.2 The USSD’s international religious freedom report for 2018 citing other sources noted that:

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 26.3 million (midyear 2019 estimate)

- 69.2% Christian
- 20.9% Muslim
- 5.6% animist
- 1.0% other religions
- 3.2% report no religious affiliation.
- Of Christians, approximately:
 - 55.5% are Roman Catholic
 - 38% Protestant

⁹ UN CERD – ‘[Combined twenty-second and twenty-third reports](#)’ (p9), 22 July 2019

¹⁰ Freedom House, ‘[2020 Freedom in the World Report](#)’ (section B4), 4 March 2020

¹¹ Freedom House, ‘[2020 Freedom in the World Report](#)’ (section F4), 4 March 2020

¹² CIA World Factbook, ‘[Cameroon](#)’ (section People and society), updated 24 November 2020

¹³ RoC – Presidency of the Republic – website, ‘[Presentation of Cameroon](#)’, undated

- 6.5% other Christian denominations, including Jehovah’s Witnesses and Orthodox churches.

The 2010 Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project found that:

- 70.3% of the population was Christian
- 18.3% Muslim
- 3.3% animist
- 2.7% other religions
- 5.5% with no religious affiliation.
- Of the Christians, this report found that 38.3 percent were Catholic and 31.4 percent were Protestant. There is a growing number of Christian revivalist churches.

‘Christians are concentrated primarily in the southern and western parts of the country. The two Anglophone regions are largely Protestant, and the five southern Francophone regions are mostly Catholic. The Fulani (Peuhl) ethnic group is mostly Muslim and lives primarily in the northern Francophone regions; the Bamoun ethnic group is also predominantly Muslim and lives in the West Region. Many Muslims, Christians, and members of other faiths also adhere to some aspects of animist beliefs.’¹⁴

4.4.3 See also CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 5 updated: 2 December 2020

5. Economy

5.1 Socio-economic conditions

5.1.1 The March 2019 Congressional Research Service ‘In Focus’ report stated:

‘Cameroon’s economy relies heavily on primary commodity exports, notably crude oil and petroleum products (including Chadian-origin oil exported via the World Bankfinanced Chad-Cameroon pipeline), timber, aluminium, and agricultural products such as coffee, cocoa, and cotton. Cameroon ranked 151 out of 188 countries on the 2018 U.N. Human Development Index, above many African countries. Despite several large cities and developed infrastructure in some areas, about 70% of the labor force is engaged in agriculture. Annual economic growth has averaged 4.3% over the past decade, not consistently outpacing population growth. Corruption, policy barriers to trade and regional integration, fiscal mismanagement, security threats, and volatile global commodity prices are key challenges. Growth has suffered due to the crisis in the Anglophone regions, a hub for commercial agriculture.’¹⁵

¹⁴ USSD, ‘[2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Cameroon](#)’ (section I), 10 June 2020

¹⁵ CRS, ‘[In Focus – Cameroon](#)’ (section The Economy), 12 March 2019

- 5.1.2 Cameroon is one of six countries¹⁶ that use the Central African CFA franc (Coopération Financière en Afrique centrale) the CFA was renamed in December 2019 from Communauté Financière Africaine¹⁷. A central bank [based in Yaoundé] issues currency for the participating African states¹⁸. 1 GBP = 726.729 CFA Francs¹⁹ (as at 2 December 2020).
- 5.1.3 The Trading Economics website noted that 'The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Cameroon was worth 38 billion US dollars in 2019.'²⁰
- 5.1.4 The World Trade Organisation (WTO) in their November 2019 report classified Cameroon as a middle income country²¹ while the World Bank describes Cameroon as a lower-middle-income country²². The CIA World Factbook estimated that GDP per capita, based on purchasing power parity, was US\$3,700 in 2017 (to note this figure is not necessarily the average income)²³.
- 5.1.5 The World Bank stated in October 2019:
- 'Because its poverty reduction rate is lagging behind its population growth rate, the overall number of poor in Cameroon increased by 12% to 8.1 million between 2007 and 2014, and poverty is increasingly concentrated, with 56% of poor living in the northern regions.
- 'Cameroon is the largest economy in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), a region experiencing an economic crisis triggered by the steep fall in oil prices. Along with its CEMAC partners, Cameroon has therefore had to put fiscal adjustment measures in place to adjust to the terms of trade shock and restore macro-stability and confidence in the common currency.
- 'Growth in Cameroon is expected to reach 4.3% this year. The rebound is driven by three factors: an increase in natural gas production, with a new liquefied natural gas (LNG) offshore terminal coming online; the slight downturn in the oil sector; and sustained momentum in the construction, industry, housing, and services sectors.'²⁴
- 5.1.6 A Lloyds Bank report of October 2020 about the country's economy noted:
- 'With a strategic location that makes the country a natural gateway into the landlocked region of Central Africa (including Chad, Central African Republic and northern Congo), Cameroon is undoubtedly an influential country in the economic and monetary community of Central Africa. According to IMF, in 2019, Cameroon's growth fell to 3.7% from 4.1% a year earlier. This was mainly due to lower than anticipated performance in the non-oil sector. This decline was partially offset by the rebound in the oil and gas

¹⁶ Reuters, '[West Africa renames CFA franc but keeps it pegged to Euro](#)', 21 December 2019

¹⁷ CIA World Factbook, '[Cameroon](#)' (section Economy), updated 24 November 2020

¹⁸ CurrencyConverter, '[Cameroon CFA Franc – XAF](#)', undated

¹⁹ [XE Currency Converter](#), undated

²⁰ Trading Economics, '[Cameroon GDP](#)', undated

²¹ WTO, '[Assessing the Economic Value of the Rules Based...](#)' November 2019

²² World Bank, '[The World Bank in Cameroon – Overview](#)', last updated 4 October 2019

²³ CIA World Factbook, '[Cameroon](#)' (section Economy), updated 24 November 2020

²⁴ World Bank, '[The World Bank in Cameroon – Overview](#)', last updated 4 October 2019

sector. According to the updated IMF forecasts from 14th April 2020, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, GDP growth is expected to fall to -1.2% in 2020 and pick up to 4.1% in 2021, subject to the post-pandemic global economic recovery.’²⁵

5.1.7 The same report noted:

‘... poverty affects nearly 40% of the population, around 8 million people. Because the poverty reduction rate is lagging behind the population growth rate, the overall number of poor in Cameroon increased, and poverty is increasingly concentrated in the North and Far North [...]. The latter regions are also hit by the attacks of the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. Human rights groups say at least 160,000 Cameroonians have been internally displaced since December 2017, and 20,000 have fled to Nigeria [...].’²⁶

5.1.8 The CIA World Factbook noted in its overview of the country’s economy:

‘Cameroon’s market-based, diversified economy features oil and gas, timber, aluminum, agriculture, mining and the service sector. Oil remains Cameroon’s main export commodity, and despite falling global oil prices, still accounts for nearly 40% of exports. Cameroon’s economy suffers from factors that often impact underdeveloped countries, such as stagnant per capita income, a relatively inequitable distribution of income, a top-heavy civil service, endemic corruption, continuing inefficiencies of a large parastatal system in key sectors, and a generally unfavorable climate for business enterprise.’²⁷

5.1.9 For further information and details on the socio-economic situation of women, see the CPIN [Cameroon: Background note](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

5.2 Employment

5.2.1 A Lloyds Bank report of October 2020 about the country’s economy noted that the ‘Unemployment rate of total labor in the country was 3.3% in 2019.’²⁸

5.2.2 The UN Economic and Social Council remarked in their report ‘Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cameroon’ in March 2019:

‘The Committee notes with concern that, despite the State party’s efforts to improve the situation, unemployment and underemployment rates remain markedly high, particularly among young people and women. The Committee also remains concerned at the difficulties faced by certain groups, such as indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and English speaking persons, in gaining access to the labour market, including employment in government service...

‘The Committee notes with concern that the vast majority of workers, especially women workers, are employed in the informal sector of the economy and are therefore not properly protected by labour laws or covered

²⁵ Lloyds Bank, [‘The economic context of Cameroon’](#), October 2020

²⁶ Lloyds Bank, [‘The economic context of Cameroon’](#), October 2020

²⁷ CIA World Factbook, [‘Cameroon’](#) (section Economy), updated 24 November 2020

²⁸ Lloyds Bank, [‘The economic context of Cameroon’](#), October 2020

by the social protection system... 'The Committee takes note with concern of the wage gap between men and women, which is partly attributable to the overrepresentation of women in the informal economy, and of reports of discrimination and violence against women in the workplace...' 'The Committee is concerned by allegations that the substandard working conditions to which members of indigenous peoples are subjected are tantamount to forced labour.'²⁹

5.2.3 The USSD's human rights report for 2019, covering events in 2019 noted:

'The law contains no specific provisions against discrimination, but the constitution in its preamble provides that all persons shall have equal rights and obligations and that every person shall have the right and the obligation to work.

'Discrimination in employment and occupation allegedly occurred with respect to ethnicity, HIV status, disability, gender, and sexual orientation, especially in the private sector. Ethnic groups often gave preferential treatment to members of their respective ethnic group in business and social practices, and persons with disabilities reportedly found it difficult to secure and access employment. There were no reliable reports of discrimination against internal migrant or foreign migrant workers, although anecdotal reports suggested such workers were vulnerable to unfair working conditions. The government took no action to eliminate or prevent discrimination and kept no records of incidents of discrimination.'³⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

5.3 Social support / protection

5.3.1 The UN Economic and Social Council remarked in their report 'Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cameroon' in March 2019: 'The Committee notes with concern that the State party's social protection system is heavily based on formal employment and that, despite the adoption of a voluntary insurance scheme, a significant number of persons continue to be excluded from the social protection system, including workers in the informal economy, self-employed persons and persons performing unpaid domestic work and other tasks, especially women.'³¹

5.3.2 The same report also stated:

'The Committee is aware of the significant challenges that the State party faces in reducing poverty and ensuring the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living owing, in particular, to the security crisis affecting the country and the wider region. Nevertheless, the Committee notes with concern that the State party's anti-poverty programmes are proving insufficient: poverty rates remain very high and disproportionately affect the inhabitants of rural and remote areas. The Committee is also concerned about the high level of inequality in the State party.'³²

²⁹ UN – ['ECOSOC, 'Concluding observations...'](#) (Para 30,32,34,36), 25 March 2019

³⁰ USSD, ['Human rights report 2019](#) (section 7)', 11 March 2020

³¹ UN – ['ECOSOC, 'Concluding observations...'](#) (Para 40), 25 March 2019

³² UN – ['ECOSOC, 'Concluding observations...'](#) (Para 48), 25 March 2019

- 5.3.3 A 2019 US Social Security Administration report describes the pension, maternity, disability and severance pay benefits available and their qualifying conditions.³³
- 5.3.4 The Encyclopaedia Britannica observed in October 2019: ‘There is no government system of social security covering the whole population. Most assistance is obtained through the traditional kinship system. The National Social Insurance Fund, financed by employee and employer contributions, provides limited pension benefits for wage employees.’³⁴
- 5.3.5 See also [US Social Security Service: Cameroon](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

5.4 Education

- 5.4.1 The UN Economic and Social Council remarked in their report ‘Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cameroon’ in March 2019: ‘The Committee notes with concern that numerous challenges remain with regard to the effective enjoyment of the right to education in the State party. In this regard, it is concerned at:
- ‘(a) The decline in the primary school enrolment rate;
 - ‘(b) The low enrolment rate for girls and the difficulties that remain in terms of their admission to school and their continued attendance;
 - ‘(c) The lack of adequate school infrastructure, including insufficient access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities;
 - ‘(d) The school costs at the primary education level occasioned by indirect and unofficial fees that have a disproportionate impact on children from low-income households;
 - ‘(e) Obstacles to the realization of the right to education for indigenous peoples owing, in part, to the fact that educational programmes are not culturally appropriate and to the limited availability of instruction in indigenous languages;
 - ‘(f) Acts of violence directed at teachers, students and parents and damage to educational infrastructure in areas affected by the security crises in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions of the country.’³⁵
- 5.4.2 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reported in their situation report, Cameroon: North-West and South-West as of 31 January 2020 that: ‘The increase in school attendance since September 2019 is positive. Schools resumed for the second term of the academic year this month. The number of students is 31% higher than in September 2019 when the academic year started. However, most functional official schools are in urban areas.’³⁶
- 5.4.3 A UN OCHA report from February 2020 noted:

³³ US SSA, ‘[Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Africa](#)’, 2019, September 2019

³⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica, ‘[Cameroon](#)’ (Health and welfare), 2 April 2020

³⁵ UN – ‘[ECOSOC, ‘Concluding observations...’](#)’, (Para 60), 25 March 2019

³⁶ UNOCHA, ‘[Cameroon: North-West and South-West](#)’, (p2), 31 January 2020

'A slight increase (5%) was recorded in school attendance in the month of February [2020] (231,136) compared to the month of January [2020] (221,058) with an additional 10,078 children in the NWSW accessing learning. The NW registered a 3% increase (2,402 children) and the SW 5% (7,677 children). This could be attributable to the gradually improving security environment for the children in urban areas. 32% (9,174 out of 28,220) of basic and secondary formal schoolteachers are reporting to work in the NWSW which is a slight increase of 0.43% (from 9,135 to 9,174 teachers) compared to the previous month.'³⁷

5.4.4 The USSD human rights report for 2019 noted that:

'The law provides for tuition-free compulsory primary education but does not set an age limit. The law punishes any parent with sufficient means who refuses to send his or her child to school with a fine between 50,000 and 500,000 CFA francs (\$85 and \$850). The punishment is imprisonment from one to two years in cases in which the offense is repeated. Children were generally expected to complete primary education at 12. Secondary school students have to pay tuition and other fees in addition to buying uniforms and books. This rendered secondary education unaffordable for many children.

'During the year [2019] separatist attacks on the schools in the Anglophone Southwest and Northwest Regions continued to disrupt the normal operation of schools. In its July report on the Southwest and Northwest crisis, OCHA indicated that more than 700,000 children—representing almost nine of every 10 children—had been out of school for nearly three years and that 80 percent of schools remained closed in the Northwest and Southwest Regions.

'In May [2019] Catholic authorities agreed to close St. Bede's College in Kom, Northwest Region, after the school principal was kidnapped, allegedly for not respecting the separatists' call for a school boycott. The Presbyterian Church also agreed to close all its schools in the two Anglophone regions after armed separatists kidnapped more than 90 children in two separate incidents in October and November.

'Dozens of schools remained closed in the Far North Region due to attacks from Boko Haram and ISIS-WA.'³⁸

5.4.5 A United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) basic education programme strategy note for 2018-2020 stated:

'Lack of access to and poor quality of early education facilities: Only around 27% of children nationwide have access to preschool programmes, and that figure drops precipitously for children in the lowest income quintile and for those living in the rural areas. Where they exist, these programmes are simply too expensive for many families, and they are scarce outside of urban settings.

'Shortage of both teachers and teaching materials: Once in school, children often find themselves in overcrowded classrooms (average of 76 students

³⁷ UNOCHA, '[Cameroon: North-West and South-West](#)', (p3), 29 February 2020

³⁸ USSD, '[Human rights report 2019](#) (section 6)', 11 March 2020

for every teacher) and forced to share basic resources, like textbooks. Based on a sampling study conducted by Unicef in targeted zones, the average ratios are: 17 pupils for every reading French/English textbook, 9 for mathematics and 31 for sciences.

'Late enrolment and low retention rates: While girls' enrolment in school is growing, too many children still enrol in school too late and drop out early. The completion rate for primary education was 76% in 2015 (72% for girls), and 78% of those continued (77% for girls) on to lower secondary education nationwide. However, in the northern regions, the average transition rate is 47% (43% for girls). More than 12% of primary school children in Cameroon repeat a grade each year.'³⁹

5.4.6 VOA news reported that after schools in Cameroon were closed to stop the spread of COVID-19, many re-opened on 5 October 2020⁴⁰.

5.4.7 A UN OCHA report from November 2020 noted:

'The main objective of the 2020/2021 school year was to encourage children to resume classes over the country, amidst COVID-19 crisis. In a report published in August 2019, UNICEF revealed that 80 per cent of schools had closed in the North-West and South-West regions since the beginning of the crisis, preventing over 3,000 students to attend classes. According to the Governor of the North-West region in an interview given on 7 October 2020, both the North-West and South-West regions have recorded the highest rate of school attendance since 2017. This auspicious reopening of schools was however hampered by the neglect of prevention measures: Children were admitted in classrooms without masks and schools do not have handwashing devices. UNICEF donated handwashing stations for schools in the North-West and South-West regions to support the Government's "Back to School campaign without COVID19". Yet regional delegations for education in these areas face financial hardship to transport the material to various localities where schools have reopened.'⁴¹

5.4.8 For more information on children and education see also CPIN [Cameroon: Background note](#) and for schools in the North-West / South-West Regions see the CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#).

5.4.9 See also: [UN OCHA – Situation reports and Humanitarian Bulletins](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

5.5 Food security

5.5.1 A World Food Programme report published in August 2019 stated:

'In Cameroon's Far North, 316 000 people were food insecure, representing an 80 percent increase between 2018 and 2019. A 45 percent increase in incursions from January to June 2019 compared with the same six months in 2018 triggered new population displacements, limited crop production and food availability in certain areas and reduced cross-border trade, lowering purchasing power...

³⁹ Unicef, '[Cameroon Country Programme 2018-2020](#) (p2)', undated

⁴⁰ VOA, '[Cameroon reopens schools after 7 month COVID closure](#)', 5 October 2020

⁴¹ UNOCHA, '[Cameroon: North-West and South-West](#)', (p9), 2 November 2020

'Incursions [Boko Haram related], together with damages to crops caused by wild animals, limited crop production and food availability in certain areas. Insecurity and strict border controls also slowed trade with Chad and Nigeria to the detriment of Cameroonian cash crops and livestock producers, in particular, who already faced low prices and reduced purchasing power. Income sources and livelihood opportunities were also particularly limited for poor households and IDPs.'⁴²

5.5.2 UN OCHA in their June 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

'Disruption of markets and food and nutrition services due to the COVID-19 epidemic will negatively impact on the quality of diets and nutrition practices, which translate into an increase of mortality, morbidity and malnutrition among the population groups with the highest nutrition needs. According to Cadre Harmonisé analysis from March 2020, almost 4.9 million people will be in food insecurity phase 3 and 4, employing stress, crisis or emergency coping strategies to secure household level food security as a result of overall effects of COVID19.'⁴³

5.5.3 The same report also stated:

'4.8 Million people are estimated to be in acute food insecurity in Cameroon by the end of December 2019. With COVID-19 containment measures put in place by the Government, climatic shocks an ever-lasting threat and continued fighting hindering the population to access fields and livelihoods, sustained humanitarian food and livelihood response is required to save them from peril; without the necessary resources and response activities, the number of people in need will certainly increase and further need of response resources will be more important and this deterioration will conduct to food insecurity and nutrition status of more vulnerable people.'⁴⁴

5.5.4 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reported in their situation report, Cameroon: North-West and South-West as of 31 August 2020 that:

'The food security situation in the NWSW remains precarious. The cluster is prioritizing resource mobilization and a modality shift from in-kind to cash programming where possible. As of August 2020, 29 partners collectively assisted 245,911 people in the NWSW regions. This figure represents an 8 percent decrease compared to the 269,179 people assisted in July. The decrease is mainly due to the end of projects of two key partners. Around 90 percent of the total beneficiaries received food assistance either through in-kind or cash/voucher modalities. 66 percent of beneficiaries were in the NW. A total of 5 partners reported having implemented COVID-19 support activities.'⁴⁵

5.5.5 The same report with regard nutrition noted:

'In August, 26,521 children [in NWSW regions] under 5 years of age were screened for acute malnutrition with 110 (0.4 percent) identified with severe

⁴² WFP – '[Monitoring food security in countries with conflict...](#)' (p8) August 2019

⁴³ UNOCHA, '[Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon](#)', (p15) June 2020.

⁴⁴ UNOCHA, '[Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon](#)', (p90) June 2020.

⁴⁵ UNOCHA, '[Cameroon: North-West and South-West](#)', (p4), 31 August 2020.

acute malnutrition (SAM) and 323 (1.2 percent) children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM). 245K People received food and livelihood assistance 10.2K Consulted through mobile clinic teams CAMEROON: North-West and South-West, Situation Report No. 22 | 5 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs www.unocha.org 94 children with SAM (85 percent) were supported with treatment, however 15 percent were not able to receive treatment as coverage and availability of SAM treatment is still low compared to the number of cases identified. The existing referral system still needs to be strengthened.’⁴⁶

5.5.6 For more information on food shortages see also [World Food Programme – Cameroon](#) and CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#).

5.5.7 See also: [UN OCHA – Situation reports and Humanitarian Bulletins](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

5.6 Housing / shelter

5.6.1 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reported in their situation report, Cameroon: North-West and South-West as of 31 August 2020 that:

‘The deteriorating security situation has resulted in multiple population displacements across the NWSW with over 11,718 people forced to flee their homes to seek shelter in nearby bushes and villages. The NW region has been more affected with over 10,200 displaced people. These movements are often temporary and the displaced return to their homes once the security situation allows...

‘In the two regions [NWSW] 18,979 individuals (11,242 in the NW and 7,736 in the SW) from 1,805 households benefited from shelter cluster support in August 2020. In the SW, UNHCR and its partner Plan International assisted 536 households in Buea and Tiko (Fako division). These overcrowded households visibly needed more assistance in NFIs and Plan International will add to the number of NFI kits provided. IOM assisted 85 households in Kumba (SW) with shelter kits while 184 were assisted in the NW. NRC distributed 200 NFI kits in the Tubah subdivision of Mezam division (NW), reaching up to 1,280 individuals. Elsewhere, 800 households benefited from assistance in core relief items as Plan International carried out distributions in some highly affected communities in Bali (NW). Also, in the NW close to 8,613 persons were reached with core relief items (NFI) in villages such as Gungong, Mbufung, Jam, Mbeluh/Medum, Mbadmande, Kopin, Bali Centre, Njenka all in Bali subdivision (Mezam).’⁴⁷

5.6.2 UN OCHA in their June 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

‘In the eastern, northern, and Adamawa regions, the [...] majority of the displaced have arrived in their current areas of livelihood without any means of subsistence, and it is with humanitarian aid that they have been able to obtain shelter and household items to cope with an austere life.

⁴⁶ UNOCHA, [‘Cameroon: North-West and South-West’](#), (p4-5), 31 August 2020.

⁴⁷ UNOCHA, [‘Cameroon: North-West and South-West’](#), (p2, 6-7), 31 August 2020.

'In the North West and South West regions, the situation of violence in the regions forces the internally displaced to live in forests without permanent/adequate housing. Assessments of shelter / non-food items show that most IDPs live dispersed in spontaneous sites within forests. Some live with host families, while others move to large cities / urban centers where they rent a house or an apartment. Even when displaced people are housed with host families or in an urban area, they often live in precarious sanitary conditions in overcrowded accommodations.'⁴⁸

5.6.3 CPIT has been unable to find any further information regarding housing and shelter generally in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

5.6.4 For updates see: [UN OCHA – Situation reports and Humanitarian Bulletins](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 6 updated: 2 December 2020

6. Healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene

6.1.1 A World Health Organisation case study from 2017 stated:

'Primary health care (PHC) [in Cameroon] is provided in line with the health district framework proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa, entailing a nurse-based, doctor-supported infrastructure of State-owned, denominational and private integrated health centres. It is supported by a diverse and fragmented system of community health workers recruited by priority public health vertical programmes. The 2016 evaluation of this sectoral strategy found that 7% of the 189 health districts were serviced. The PHC system has achieved high routine immunization coverage rates, high coverage of malaria-preventive technologies and high coverage of HIV screening.

'PHC performance in Cameroon is below expectations when compared to the current health expenditure, mostly because of growing privatization, the weak regulatory system and lack of accountability. Cameroon has one of the highest levels of health care expenditure occurring in the informal sector (up to 30%, mostly in primary health care). User fees are usually charged at the point of use, except for some services for specific population groups. Up to 66% of health expenditure is out-of-pocket payments. The maternal mortality ratio has increased in Cameroon during the last 20 years, despite the increasing annual per capita health expenditure, which reached US\$ 59 in 2015. Growing privatization has led to a low servicing rate for health districts, particularly in rural areas, and there are stark inequalities in the distribution of human resources.

'The epidemiological profile of the country is marked by a predominance of communicable diseases, including HIV/ AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, which represent 23.66% of the overall disease burden, along with a remarkable increase in mortality due to noncommunicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, cancers, mental illnesses and trauma due to road accidents, accidents at work and occupational diseases. Among children aged under 5 years, lower respiratory tract infections, malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and nutritional deficiencies are the main causes of

⁴⁸ UNOCHA, ['Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon'](#), (p70) June 2020.

morbidity and mortality. Maternal mortality remains high at 782 deaths per 100 000 live births. Between 2004 and 2014, neonatal mortality slightly decreased from 29 per 1000 to 28 per 1000 live births; during the same period, the child mortality rate decreased from 144 per 1000 to 103 per 1000 live births, while the infant mortality rate decreased from 74 per 1000 to 60 per 1000 live births.⁴⁹

6.1.2 Referring to the crisis in the NWSW, UN Women in their May 2019 report stated:

‘The supply of health services has fallen sharply due to the lack of health personnel who fled both the violence and the destruction of health infrastructures. However, even if children and women suffer the most of that health issue, as they are exposed to serious health threats while hiding in the bush and have difficulties in adapting to climate change, men are also affected. Children and women are vulnerable because of cold weather, mosquitoes and other insect bites, which expose them to malaria. Snake bites have also been reported. Maternal and infant mortality has increased as women give birth traditionally in the bush with all the risks they and their babies are exposed. Rape and sexual exploitation of women and girls contribute to the spread of STIs and HIV/AIDS. In addition, PLWHA who were on ARVs and who have taken refuge in the bush no more have access to medicines. This increases the risk of infection, especially for women and girls who are victims of rape and sexual exploitation.

‘From the discussions with key informants, it was noted that the low rate of assisted deliveries, inadequate management of obstetric complications and high maternal mortality rates reflect women’s very limited access to health services. This is mainly due to the lack of care personnel, the closing and/or destruction of several public and private hospitals because of the conflict, and the low buying power of the population, particularly women and girls.

‘Young boys engage in the use of drugs and psychoactive substances (trams, etc.) so that they could escape trauma and have the courage to fight back against abusers. But this significantly affects their physical and mental health. Older women and men have physical and mental health problems due to the very poor living conditions since the crisis. Women/girls, men and boys have no money to access public and private hospitals, neither to buy medicines. Access to contraception is difficult for girls and women because of very low economic power and ignorance.’⁵⁰

6.1.3 An NGO working for ReachOut an organisation involved in the humanitarian response in the South West region since the start of the crisis stated in an UN OCHA Bulletin Humanitaire of November 2019 that: ‘The humanitarian situation keeps deteriorating: two years without a functional health system, that is no vaccines, no surveillance, no access to basic healthcare for most of the people living in the North-West and South-West...’⁵¹

6.1.4 A February 2020 Unicef report stated that:

⁴⁹ WHO, [Primary Health Care Systems – Case study from Cameroon](#) (overview), 2017

⁵⁰ UN Women, ‘[Cameroon: Gender profile for the South West crisis](#)’ (section 2), May 2019

⁵¹ UNOCHA, - ‘[Bulletin Humanitaire Cameroun Numéro 12](#)’ (p8), 30 November 2019

'The crisis in the NWSW has had a major impact on the health sector. Some 255 (34%) out of 7421 health facilities in both NW and SW regions remain non-functional or only partially functional (absent health personnel, destroyed infrastructure and lack of medical supplies) and access to health care is limited—including areas under Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) control. Immunization in general and measles prevention in particular have been significantly disrupted and the risk of new outbreaks increased. Poor sanitation facilities and lack of hygiene along with large numbers of displaced persons living in temporary conditions in rural areas render them susceptible to water borne diseases and malnutrition.'⁵²

6.1.5 The Encyclopaedia Britannica observed in April 2020:

'HIV/AIDS is one of Cameroon's gravest health concerns. It is particularly widespread among young women. Malaria is prevalent in many areas; respiratory and pulmonary diseases and dysentery also occur in some areas. There are incidences of leprosy and schistosomiasis as well as syphilis and sleeping sickness. The infant mortality rate remains high by world standards but is nonetheless comparatively low for the region.

'The government emphasized the improvement of the country's health facilities in the first decade after independence and increased the number of hospitals, dispensaries, and elementary health centres about sevenfold. Hospitals in major cities were modernized, and in the late 1980s the country had one of the lowest ratios of population to hospital beds in western Africa. A Health Sciences University Centre was established at the University of Yaoundé in 1969 to train physicians and other medical personnel. Precipitated by the country's economic crisis, the quality of health care declined significantly following the major cutbacks in health care spending during the 1990s and the subsequent shortage of health care professionals and medical supplies that continued in the 21st century.'⁵³

6.1.6 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reported in their situation report, Cameroon: North-West and South-West as of 31 August 2020 that:

'In August [2020] 408,230 individuals received various WASH services including COVID-19 prevention activities implemented by seven WASH partners [...] in the NWSW. The total number of individuals reached in August was 72.55 percent of the number of people reached in July 2020. Lockdowns, harvest season and heavy rains affected effective implementation of some of the WASH activities like hygiene promotion and sensitization on COVID-19. [...]

'In terms of COVID-19 prevention, 200 handwashing stations were installed in strategic public areas like markets and bus stations in seven locations of Bamenda. More than 10,000 individuals are expected to benefit from the installed handwashing stations. The harvest season has caused the community to reduce attendance at hygiene promotion and sensitization sessions. To address this constraint, sensitization sessions are carried out

⁵² Unicef, '[Cameroon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 02](#)', February 2020

⁵³ Encyclopædia Britannica, '[Cameroon](#)' (Health and welfare), 2 April 2020

very early in the morning. The first physical WASH cluster meetings since the outbreak of COVID-19 was held in the SW and NW regions on 20 and 27 August, respectively.⁵⁴

6.1.7 UN OCHA in their June 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

'2019 has witnessed an increase in the adverse effects of the humanitarian crises on people's health. Regarding the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, cholera, measles and polio epidemics were recorded with a very high risk of resurgence in 2020. Similarly, attacks by Boko Haram continue to generate injured and dead, and also target the livelihoods of populations, thereby reducing their ability to meet their health expenses, in an environment with the highest morbidity rates linked to diseases and climatic hazards in the country. Furthermore, the rate of births attended by qualified personnel remains very low in the Far North region (less than 35%) thus increasing the rate of maternal and neonatal deaths.

'For the crisis in the Adamawa, East and North regions, the situation is marked by a large cholera epidemic which affects the North region with a high risk of resurgence in 2020. The region also witnessed polio and measles epidemics in the first quarter of 2020. Although the rates of births attended by skilled birth attendants are the highest in the country (51.5% in Adamawa, 30.5% in the North and 28.9% in the East. The national average is 29%), they remain below acceptable minimal standards.

'In addition, the crisis in the North West and South West regions which negatively impacts on epidemiological surveillance, access to essential health care and reproductive health is gaining in intensity requiring rethinking equitable access to care and prevention of epidemics. In 2019, cholera, monkey pox and measles epidemics were recorded in these two regions and continue in 2020 for the South West region. In these regions in 2019, numerous attacks on health facilities targeting both infrastructure and health staff were recorded, thus reducing the number of staff going to work in the insecure areas.'⁵⁵

6.1.8 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) stated in their Humanitarian Needs Overview Cameroon 2020 issued in June 2020:

'Availability of water, hygiene and sanitation services is a pressing concern in each of the three humanitarian crises Cameroon is facing. In addition, the country remains at risk of a large-scale cholera epidemic on top of the existing crises. Since February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic represents a historic challenge for the WASH Sector in terms of providing hygiene services to large scale populations. All the 10 regions of Cameroon are now affected by at least one humanitarian crisis with most regions affected by at least two humanitarian crises. Acute humanitarian needs are compounded by a chronic lack of access to drinking water, poor hygiene practices, weak supply infrastructure and an unsanitary environment.

'According to a COVID-19 risk analysis, multisectoral assessments carried out in the main affected areas (Far North, North West and South West) and multisectoral rapid assessments, inventories of WASH infrastructures and

⁵⁴ UNOCHA, ['Cameroon: North-West and South-West'](#), (p2, 6-7), 31 August 2020.

⁵⁵ UNOCHA, ['Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon'](#), (p54) June 2020.

data related to water, hygiene and sanitation services in the main IDP and refugee sites, camps and host villages, an estimated figure of 3.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly in terms of access to drinking water, basic hygiene and sanitation services. The needs for hygiene services during the COVID-19 pandemic represent the biggest part and justify this significant increase in number of vulnerable people from 1.9 million estimated to be in need in 2020 before the outbreak of COVID-19 in Cameroon.’⁵⁶

- 6.1.9 The FCDO’s travel advice, aimed at UK nationals, which was updated on 23 November 2020 and remained current as of 30 November 2020 noted that General strikes (or ‘ghost towns’) are called in the North West and South West (Anglophone) regions for each Monday, with additional days often called in particular periods including February, May and October. Violence and travel disruption is regularly reported on these days.’
- 6.1.10 For information on health and health care in the NWSW regions see [CPIN: North-West South-West Crisis](#) and on COVID-19 see [CPIN: Background note](#)
- 6.1.11 For updates see: [UN OCHA – Situation reports and Humanitarian Bulletins](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 7 updated: 2 December 2020

7. Freedom of movement

7.1 Legal rights and practice

- 7.1.1 The USSD’s human rights report for 2019 noted that:

‘Although the constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, at times the government restricted these rights. Growing concerns over the entry of armed groups into Cameroon from the Central African Republic (CAR) and the conflict with Boko Haram in the Far North Region appeared to have prompted the government to adopt a more restrictive approach to refugee movement. The government made it more difficult for refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons to move freely in the country.

‘In some instances, the government worked with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations to provide protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern. The government sometimes failed to respect its obligations under relevant international laws. There were instances where it forcibly returned asylum seekers to their countries and did not readily provide humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations access to asylum seekers before refouling them.

‘In-country Movement: Using minor infractions as a pretext, police and gendarmes at roadblocks and checkpoints in cities and on most highways often extorted bribes and harassed travelers. Police frequently stopped travelers to check identification documents, vehicle registrations, and tax receipts as security and immigration control measures. Unaccompanied

⁵⁶ UNOCHA, [‘Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020’](#) (p60-61), revised June 2020

women were frequently harassed when traveling alone. Authorities restricted movements of persons and goods, including motorbikes, especially in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, citing security concerns. Armed Anglophone separatists also restricted the movements of persons and goods in the two Anglophone regions, sometimes in a deliberate attempt to harass and intimidate the local population. Humanitarian organizations cited difficulty in accessing certain areas and in some instances were harassed and denied passage by government authorities.

‘On June 14, Governor Adolphe Lele Lafrique of the Northwest Region lifted the curfew placed in the region since November 2018. The curfew, which lasted eight months, restricted movement of persons and property in the Northwest Region between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.’⁵⁷

7.1.2 The Refugees International report, *Crisis Denied in Cameroon*, published 29 May 2019, and referring specifically to the NWSW regions stated that ‘both Cameroonian forces and non-state armed groups severely restrict freedom of movement, preventing local populations from accessing their land and basic services’.⁵⁸

7.1.3 Freedom in the World report covering events in 2018 stated: ‘In September 2018, the governor of the Northwest Region imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in response to separatist attacks. The curfew was temporarily suspended at the end of the year. A 48-hour curfew was also imposed in the Anglophone regions leading up to “independence day” on October 1 [2018].’⁵⁹

7.1.4 The Freedom in the World report covering events in 2019 stated that: ‘Free movement is difficult in parts of the Far North Region due to Boko Haram activity. Free movement in the two Anglophone regions has also been impeded by the ongoing crisis. Residents have been forced to flee their homes due to the ongoing conflict, and some have resorted to sending their school-age children to the cities of Yaoundé and Douala.’⁶⁰

7.1.5 UN OCHA in their June 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan stated:

‘Humanitarian access remains a major challenge for the humanitarian community in the North West and South West. Access constraints identified include insecurity, physical access challenges and bureaucratic impediments. Lockdown days, with associated movement restrictions by UN agencies and NGOs, have caused substantial interruptions in humanitarian operations. Delays and demands for payment at roadblocks by both non-state armed groups and Government forces, despite having all required authorizations, cause needless delays and insecurity for the transport of aid goods. Occasionally, these roadblocks result in kidnapping attempts, or kidnapping of aid workers in demand for ransom. In addition, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which has also caused civilian victims, remains an important risk factor for humanitarian actors. At times, non-state armed groups have confiscated branded materials (sheeting, jackets), which, if used during their operations against armed forces, may cause reputational

⁵⁷ USSD, [‘Human rights report 2019’](#) (section 2), 11 March 2020

⁵⁸ Refugees International, [‘Crisis denied in Cameroon’](#), 29 May 2019

⁵⁹ Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World Report - Cameroon’](#) (section G), 4 February 2019

⁶⁰ Freedom House, [‘2020 Freedom in the World Report’](#) (section G1), 4 March 2020

damage for humanitarian actors. The suspension of UNHAS flights in January 2020 has seriously affected the efficient movement of humanitarian personnel.

'Access to basic social services by the affected population remains a critical concern in the two regions as fear of violence and lack of civil documentation limits movements (especially for men of fighting age).'⁶¹

[Back to Contents](#)

7.2 Security and crime situation

7.2.1 The March 2019 Congressional Research Service 'In Focus' report stated:

'Boko Haram has carried out hundreds of attacks in northern Cameroon, which shares a porous border with the group's stronghold in northeast Nigeria. The group appears to have used northern Cameroon as a rear base for years before beginning to operate more openly there in 2013. As of early 2019, Cameroon's Far North hosted 245,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 136,000 refugees from Nigeria, according to U.N. agencies.

'Cameroonian authorities allegedly have repatriated some Nigerians by force, in violation of international refugee conventions. The crisis has devastated the local economy and contributed to food insecurity in an already poor and remote region. Cameroon—along with Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Benin—is a member of an African Union-authorized Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to counter Boko Haram and its Islamic State-affiliated splinter group. The MNJTF has received U.S. and other donor support. The regional force has weakened Boko Haram's territorial control, but the group continues to pose a threat in Cameroon. In late 2018, the government announced plans for the disarmament and reintegration of Boko Haram members and Anglophone militants, but the way forward remains uncertain.'⁶²

7.2.2 The UN Economic and Social Council remarked in their report 'Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Cameroon' in March 2019:

'The Committee is concerned by the general lack of security in the Far North Region of the State party, where non-State armed groups have been carrying out terrorist attacks. It is also deeply concerned by the widespread violence being witnessed in the North-West and South-West Regions, where most of the population belongs to the English-speaking community, and by reports that acts of violence leading to the destruction of hospitals, schools and entire villages in those Regions have been committed by non-State armed groups and by members of the State party's security forces. The Committee is concerned about the serious impact of these situations on the enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights of the persons concerned, including women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.'⁶³

7.2.3 A November 2019 United Nations security council report stated:

⁶¹ UNOCHA, '[Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon](#)', (p32) June 2020.

⁶² CRS, '[In Focus – Cameroon](#)' (section Boko Haram insurgency), 12 March 2019

⁶³ UN – '[ECOSOC, 'Concluding observations...'](#)', (Para 4), 25 March 2019

'Boko Haram attacks on civilian and military targets continued in the Far North Region of Cameroon and in the Lac Province of Chad. Between 1 June and 30 September, there were 130 reported Boko Haram-related security incidents in Cameroon, with 98 civilian fatalities, and 25 incidents in Chad, with 22 civilian fatalities. The Government of Chad reinstated security measures that included a ban on fishing and the closure of markets in border areas. On 10 June, intense fighting near a military installation in Darak, Cameroon, claimed the lives of more than 15 Cameroonian soldiers. On 21 June, clashes near Ngouboua in the Lac Province of Chad led to the death of 11 Chadian soldiers, including three officers. Authorities confirmed that 26 Boko Haram fighters were also killed. On 13 August, a female suicide bomber killed six people, including one soldier, in the same region. On 13 September, it was reported that Boko Haram had attacked a military post in Soueram, near Fotokol in Cameroon, killing six Cameroonian soldiers and wounding nine others. Increasingly, landmines were used in carrying out attacks. On 17 September, a Chadian soldier was killed when his vehicle drove over a mine in the vicinity of Kaïga Kindjiria in the Lac Province.

'In Cameroon, the escalation of violence and insecurity caused humanitarian needs to reach their highest levels yet. Some 4.3 million people required emergency assistance – a 30 per cent increase compared with 2018. Checkpoints established by both security forces and armed non-State actors made it difficult for humanitarian actors to gain access to the population. Violence and insecurity had dramatic effects on the lives of civilians, in particular women and children. The deteriorating economic and security situation contributed to high rates of sexual abuse and exploitation and other types of gender-based violence. Concerns related to the protection of teenage boys and young men persisted, including with regard to killings, kidnappings, arbitrary detention and forced recruitment. In the North-West and SouthWest Regions, violence continued to affect 1.3 million people, including over 700,000 people who were uprooted from their homes. Armed fighting and insecurity in the two regions continued to be the principal impediment to the provision of assistance and a barrier for those in need to reach areas where they could receive aid. Attacks on health infrastructure and personnel, schools, teachers, parents and children persisted.

'A technical team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) visited Cameroon from 5 to 27 September and found that serious human rights violations and abuses, attributed to both government security forces and armed separatists, were occurring across the two regions. OHCHR received allegations of unlawful killing, rape and gang rape, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, abduction for ransom, infringement of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, forced displacement, destruction of property and attacks on schools and medical facilities, as well as arbitrary detention. There was concern regarding impunity.'⁶⁴

7.2.4 The Human Rights Watch 2020 World Report covering events in 2019 noted:

'The Islamist armed group Boko Haram carried out over 100 attacks in the Far North region since January 2019 killing more than 100 civilians. The

⁶⁴ UN, Security Council, ['The situation in Central Africa'](#) (p4), 29 November 2019

conflict between government forces and Boko Haram has killed thousands of Cameroonians and displaced over 270,000 since 2014, leading to the rise of self-defense vigilante groups.

'In Anglophone regions, violence intensified as government forces conducted large-scale security operations and armed separatists carried out increasingly sophisticated attacks. Over 3,000 civilians and hundreds of security forces personnel have been killed in the Anglophone regions since 2016, when the crisis started. The unrest in these regions led to the displacement of over half-a-million people. In August, 10 leaders of a separatist group, the Ambazonia Interim Government, were sentenced to life by a military court, following a trial that raised concerns of due process and violations of fair trial rights.

'Government forces and armed separatists have killed, violently assaulted, or kidnapped people with disabilities as they struggled to flee attacks, or because they were left behind.

'Cameroonian authorities cracked down on the political opposition, violently broke up peaceful protests, and arrested hundreds of opposition party leaders, members, and supporters.'⁶⁵

7.2.5 The USSD's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Crime and Safety Report for the country, updated in April 2020, noted:

'[...]. Most crime is economically motivated. Street crime is endemic in major metropolitan areas, and ranges from opportunistic to violent in nature. Low-level and more sophisticated criminals alike continue to target relatively wealthy Cameroonians, expatriates, and members of the diplomatic community. Criminals have robbed expatriates as well as locals inside and outside their residences, on the street, and in restaurants, shops, and taxis. Pickpockets operate at large gatherings and soccer matches, as well as at airports. Thieves often attempt to distract a victim by asking questions or bumping/jostling them, allowing an accomplice to snatch valuables.

'Criminals may be armed. Often, thieves use knives or razor blades to cut valuables out of pockets, handbags, or backpacks. Thieves may also draw victims in close and place the tip of a knife or other sharp object in the victim's side, while leading the victim to an isolated location or crowd before taking or demanding money. Thieves routinely use motorcycles to conduct drive-by snatchings of purses and other valuables. Theft by intimidation or extortion is also a common tactic, with criminal groups brandishing machetes and using them in the face of resistance or non-compliance.

'Generally, the holiday period from November through early January brings upticks in street crime, thefts from occupied and unoccupied vehicles, residential break-ins, highway banditry, and armed robberies. These crimes can escalate to violence, especially when victims resist or fight back; comply with the demands of criminals as much as possible. Many crimes involve an "inside man" and target individuals or locations associated with payrolls, money transfers, or large sums of cash. [...]

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, ['2020 World Report'](#), 13 January 2020

'Theft of items from hotel rooms is common. Home invasions by gangs occur in wealthier neighborhoods, especially at locations without 24-hour guards and residential security enhancements (e.g., perimeter walls, window grilles, solid-core/metal doors). [...]

Carjacking is a concern throughout the country and has led to deadly confrontations.

'Violent crime, including armed robbery, has increased around Douala and some towns in Littoral region. Internal displacement and economic desperation stemming from the Anglophone crisis are likely drivers of this trend.'⁶⁶

7.2.6 A UNHCR Cameroon factsheet from June 2020 stated:

'The security situation in the North-West and South-West regions during the reporting period remained very tense. Despite a ceasefire announcement by some separatists armed groups, hostilities continued between government security forces and the non-state armed groups. Consequently, incidents of kidnapping increased in the last weeks of June as these represents opportunities for armed groups to generate more money through ransom payments. In an audio message released via social media on 21 June, NSAGs warned the UN not to participate in the government mission or face attacks. This could increase the anti-UN rhetoric among separatist fighters and jeopardize staff safety and humanitarian access negotiations in an increasingly complex and volatile environment.

'In the Far North, the security situation remained volatile and worrying with various actions carried out by presumed Boko Haram militants. Access to humanitarian space remains a constant challenge for both humanitarian actors and beneficiaries, due to either military operations or terrorist attacks, or for national security reasons. Humanitarian actors are not currently a direct target but could be opportunistic targets. Due to the rainy season, cases of kidnapping in the field is recurrent. This will result in the reduction of farming activities and little harvest which will negatively impact on food security in the region.'⁶⁷

7.2.7 For more information on the security situation see CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

7.3 Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

7.3.1 UN OCHA in a Cameroon Humanitarian dashboard covering January to June 2020 noted:

'In the reporting period, Cameroon continued to be affected by four concurrent, complex humanitarian crises: the armed conflict in the Far North region; violence in the North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions; consequences of the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) into the eastern regions (Adamawa, North and East); and since early March 2020 the COVID-19 outbreak. Over 3.9 million people were estimated

⁶⁶ OSAC, '[2020 Crime and Safety Report-Cameroon](#)', 28 April 2020

⁶⁷ UNCHR, '[Cameroon factsheet](#)' (p2), June 2020

to be in need in 2020 before the COVID-19 outbreak – a number which rose to 6.2 million due to the impact of the pandemic. Humanitarian challenges are aggravated by structural factors and chronic vulnerabilities that hinder the long-term recovery of affected people.

‘As of 30 June 2020, 1.8 million people were displaced within Cameroon, either internally displaced, refugees or returnees. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Far North is steadily increasing because of the armed conflict which forced over 559,000 people to leave their homes. Priority needs of the displaced population include access to water, food and health care. The crisis in the NWSW led to the displacement of 740,000 people, including nearly 60,000 people who fled to Nigeria. People continue to move within the two regions and to other regions, some being displaced by violence several times. Temporary displacements continue to be recorded as civilians flee for safety.

‘Over 15,780 individuals were reportedly newly displaced in the NWSW due to ongoing violence during the month of June 2020. Protection continues to be a major humanitarian concern in the two regions. The number of Central African refugees, mostly located in the eastern regions of Cameroon, has increased from 217,000 in 2017 to 245,000 in 2018 and to 275,000 in June 2020. 70 percent of these refugees have no formal education and 50 percent are without employment. 30 percent live in formal sites while 70 percent stay with host communities.’⁶⁸

7.3.2 For more information on the Humanitarian situation and IDPs see CPIN [Cameroon: North-West South-West Crisis](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Terms of Reference

A ‘Terms of Reference’ (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office’s Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Geography
 - Physical and political geography, transport network
 - Demography, including size, ethnic-religious make-up, languages, IDPs
- Socio-economic situation
 - Economy
 - Employment
 - Personal finance
 - Food security / availability

⁶⁸ UNOCHA, [‘Cameroon: Humanitarian dashboard Jan-June 2020’](#), 11 November 2020

- NWSW areas and IDPs
- Social support
 - Government services
 - Civil society
- Housing / shelter and hygiene, including water, sewage
- Healthcare
- Education
- Security situation
 - Civil conflict (Anglophones)
 - Crime
- Freedom of movement
 - Legal rights
 - Documentation

[Back to Contents](#)

Archived

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[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

Archived

Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
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[Back to Contents](#)

Archived