

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Education:** In 2021, two out of three schools have been non-operational in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions, affecting over 700,000 students.
- **Displacement:** Over 2,500 people fled their villages in the NWSW.
- **Food security:** More than 200,000 vulnerable people did not receive food assistance in September in the NWSW due to ban of movements and activities.
- **COVID-19:** Between 21 and 28 September, 4,024 positive cases were reported, the highest number in a week since March 2021.

FIGURES

(OCHA/IOM JULY 2021, UNHCR SEPTEMBER 2021, IOM JULY 2021, OCHA FEBRUARY 2020)

4.4 million

People in need of humanitarian assistance

3 million

People targeted by the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan

1 million

Internally displaced people

460,317

Refugees and asylum seekers

466,578

Returnees (previously IDPs)

FUNDING

AS OF 27 SEPTEMBER 2021
(HRP 2021, FINANCIAL TRACKING SERVICES –FTS)

362 million

Requested in US dollar

29 per cent

Funded as of 27 September 2021



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ANOTHER YEAR OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING FOR THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN

Since 2017, attacks have highly affected education in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions. Teachers and students are attacked, kidnapped, threatened and killed. Attacks are displacing thousands of families forcing them to live in the bush where neither schools nor other basic services are available. In 2021, two schools in three have been non-operational, affecting over 700,000 students.



Community learning school operated by volunteers and funded by the community in the North-West region | Credit: OCHA/ Mouangue

“When the crisis started in 2017, I continued teaching despite non-State armed groups’ (NSAGs) threats and calls for school closure,” said Elisabeth, a teacher in Bamenda, NW region. “One day, one of my former students informed me that a NSAG was targeting me for violating their teaching ban,” she added.

Despite the threats, Elisabeth continued her work until the school principal was abducted. Even though he was released three days later after the ransom payment, the school was closed as parents and teachers decided not to take additional risks.

“We would hear news of abduction of children on their way to school every day. When I heard that NSAG members were planning to kidnap me, I left with my children to Bafoussam in the West region,” Elisabeth added. NSAGs threaten teachers frequently in the two regions, force them to stop their activities, and to flee to safe localities.



Children learn through radio education programme, under the supervision of a GPA focal person | Credit: GPA

On 15 September, a NSAG kidnapped eight students in Bamenda. They harassed and humiliated them before being released after their families paid a ransom. In Donga-Mantung division in the North-West, they attacked a girl and chopped her fingers in reprisal for defying the lockdown and going to school. Afterward, five public school principals were kidnapped in Ngo-Ketunjia division in the North-West, and one of them was killed six days later.

In Ngwadikang village in Bali subdivision in the NW, due to insecurity, the only public primary school is non-operational since 2017. In Bali Central, located 4km from Ngwadikang, non-formal classes were operating until July 2021. After the decision of the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of Mezam to ban motorcycles on Bali axis, NSAGs responded with a ban of movement of all vehicles in the area. Consequently, markets, churches and non-formal schools were closed, and public gathering activities were put on hold.

Since 2020, UNICEF through Green Partners Association (GPA) runs a radio education

programme in some communities in Bali and Ngwadikang, to allow students to resume an education routine. Parents who cannot afford to send their children to continue their education in safe areas are getting organized in communities to set up learning spaces for children. Pascaline, an 8-year-old girl resumed learning in September 2021 in a community learning centre operated by the local NGO Community Humanitarian Emergency Board International (COHEB) in Kake, in the South-West. “After four years of not going to school, I am learning how to read and write and COHEB gave me books for free,” said Pascaline. “My mother could not send me to school because she did not have money to pay school fees and buy school uniform,” she added.

In some localities, the security situation is very volatile and the crisis has seriously impacted economic activities. NSAGs have kidnapped some heads of families, killed others, and the rest of the family struggles to provide for their basic needs. These abuses expose children to early marriage, violence, early pregnancies and child labour, depriving them of their childhood and negatively affecting their longer-term development.

As a response to this situation, education partners are supporting non-formal education especially in remote areas and in those where access to education is challenging. They distribute learning material, provide training for teachers and facilitators including psychosocial support, vocational and life skills training. They support distance education through non-formal learning platforms and radio programmes, to support the continuity of learning for conflict-affected boys and girls. Partners also provide reproductive health care and school feeding assistance to the targeted population.

Nevertheless, the Education Cluster remains underfunded. The Humanitarian Response Plan targeted 1.9 million children in Cameroon in 2021. The humanitarian actors are advocating for the increase of the funding to assist all children in need. They also advocate for the protection of education in all forms, including the protection of education buildings, assets, students, teachers and other education personnel.

CLIMATE ACTION IN A CONTEXT OF CRISIS: UNFPA’S APPROACH TO GREENING HUMANITARIAN AID

Climate change is an existential threat to several communities and its impact exacerbates the difficult living conditions of people in poor and conflict-affected regions more than others. Climate change can amplify pre-existing gender inequalities, exacerbating dispossession, marginalization, and discrimination of women and girls in affected communities

In Cameroon’s Far North region, where violence is causing the displacement of thousands of people, natural hazards are worsening the condition of the population already weakened by a prolonged security crisis and endemic poverty. The security crisis in the North-West and South-West regions also deprives people of access to their land and social services. In their response to the humanitarian crisis, some organizations provide environmentally friendly assistance.

Enhancing environment protection through the distribution of eco-friendly dignity kits

Preserving the dignity of women and girls in distress during crisis through the distribution of dignity kits is a core part of the United Nation’s Sexual and Reproductive Health agency (UNFPA)’s humanitarian intervention in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions. The kits are often made up of a variety of items including toiletry equipment, underwear, whistle, reusable sanitary pad and rechargeable solar torch light. Dignity kits are also designed to ensure environmental

protection and sustainability. Beneficiaries described most of the contents as ‘durable’, as they can be reused multiple times preventing waste.



Beneficiaries pose with dignity kits | Credit: UNFPA/ Agha Fru

Moreover, UNFPA reinforced its dignity kits with COVID-19 prevention and protection materials like hand sanitizers, reusable face masks and bleach. If historical data is a reliable indicator, around 75 per cent of the used masks, as well as other pandemic-related waste, is expected to end up in landfills, or floating in the seas. Aside from the environmental damage, the financial cost is estimated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) at around US\$40 billion. The reusable face masks provided by UNFPA are not only cost effective, but also eco-friendly. After using the washable facemask an 18-year-old recipient in Nkwen, NW, said: “I carry one reusable facemask with me everywhere I go. I do not have to buy a new one every time and it also prevents me from throwing it carelessly.”

With the growing investment in a humanitarian and development nexus approach across the UN system, as well as the recognition of the significant impact that climate change has in accelerating the severity of natural disasters, addressing climate change will increasingly be an important part of UNFPA’s actions. The agency remains committed to integrating climate change and resilience into its work and preparing communities to mitigate the risks of growing climate displacement, especially among women and girls.

REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES PLANTED 360,000 SEEDLINGS IN THE FAR NORTH REGION



Refugee children with some of the young plants distributed by the nursery at Minawao refugee camp. | Credit: UNHCR/ Xavier Bourgois

was almost deforested, but this project has helped to restore the vegetation”. The project is in line with UNHCR’s strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with refugee camps and aims to preserve the local environment. The approach includes scaling-up tree planting and clean cooking programmes, investing in solar energy systems, and reducing plastic waste.

After using the washable sanitary pad, a 20-year-old beneficiary in Buea, SW, testified that “the reusable sanitary pads contain clear guidelines on how to use and dispose of them in a manner that doesn’t pollute the environment. I used to be very skeptical about throwing my disposable pads in public trash cans. Now I worry less, because all I have to do is clean them according to the instructions and store them well for future use.” According to another beneficiary in Bamenda, NW, “the use of these sanitary pads enables me to save money.”

The solar-powered torch lights provided in the kits are useful for the population in localities with poor electricity supply. “The torch light is very helpful. We simply charge it under the sun and do not have to worry about buying or disposing of batteries,” said a beneficiary in Mamfe, SW.

Since 2014, Minawao camp in the Far North region hosts refugees who have fled violence in Nigeria. Climate change seriously affects the region which is already arid. With the arrival of refugees, the desertification process has been accelerated as many cut down the few surrounding trees for firewood. As of 30 September 2021, Minawao is hosting more than 68,103 Nigerian refugees.

In 2018, faced with this ecological and human disaster, UNHCR and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) launched a programme aimed at reversing deforestation in the camp and surrounding villages. “Since the beginning of the project, 360,000 seedlings have been grown in the nursery and planted on more than 100 hectares,” explains Abdul Aziz, LWF’s project coordinator. “The camp

THE BAN ON MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES HAMPERS THE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN THE NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS

Between 15 September and 2 October 2021, NSAGs declared a general lockdown banning all movement, work, or social activity in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions. The lockdown did not exempt humanitarian organizations' activities. Only ambulances and commutes related to medical emergencies were allowed.



An IDP receiving food assistance in the South-West region
| Credit: OCHA/ Giles Clarke

The ban of activities and movements took place in a context of high insecurity with, in certain areas, frequent use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and armed confrontations between state security forces and NSAGs.

The Ban of activities and movements increasingly hampered humanitarian access and negatively affected the civilian population and limited their access to humanitarian assistance and basic services. It also resulted in the displacement of about 2,500 people who moved to urban centers or safer localities within the North-West and South-West and to West and Littoral regions.

The suspension of humanitarian activities affected, among other services, access of vulnerable population to food assistance, health and protection services, and education in the two restive regions.

In September, over 200,000 vulnerable people did not receive food assistance and Food Security partners could not deliver fertilizers timely to 300 farmers, which might affect the quality of their agricultural products and increase the perishing risks of small farmers' crops. Health cluster partners operating in hard-to-reach areas or in areas highly affected by the security crisis also suspended the operations of the mobile clinics and the provision of life-saving interventions. The COVID-19 vaccination and the transportation of essential medications to health facilities were severely disrupted. Pregnant women, children under five, patients with chronic diseases, people living with HIV/AIDS, and victims of trauma were the most affected and malnutrition patients could not receive their life-saving supplements.

Protection partners had to halt their services including mental health and psychosocial support, which aggravated the situation of 300-500 beneficiaries among the most vulnerable people. Survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) were unable to receive psychosocial support and case management and as men were forced to stay at home with women and girls, the economic burdens and distress.

Regarding education, schools and community learning spaces in most localities have been closed, except a few urban areas mainly in the South-West.

During the last four years, NSAGs imposed a one-day ban of movement and activities every week in the two regions. These bans increasingly impoverish affected people, especially those depending on daily work to survive. OCHA and humanitarian partners continue to advocate with all parties to facilitate humanitarian access to provide life-saving assistance to the most affected people.

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