

Protection Sector Strategy Cameroon

2024-2026





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List of Acronyms

AAP – Accountability to Affected Persons.
AoR – Area of Responsibility
CCCM – Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CMCoord. – Civil-Military Coordination
CoP – Centrality of Protection
CSO – Civil Society Organizations
DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
FN – Far North
GPC – Global Protection Cluster
HC – Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT – Humanitarian Country Team
HLP – Housing, Land and Property
HRP – Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC – Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
IOM – International Organization for Migration
NSAG – Non-State Armed Group
NW/SW – North West & South West Regions
PLWD - Persons Living With Disability
SSF – State Security Forces

Introduction

Cameroon is home to some 2,222,307 forcibly displaced persons as of 31st December 2023.¹ The population comprising 479,012 Refugees, 9, 495 asylum seekers, 1,075,252 IDPs from Far North Region (519,000) and North-West/South-West Regions (607,000) and IDP returnees (658, 548). A significant increase of forcibly displaced populations when compared with 2,038,539 registered in November 2022.

Apart from the IDPs who Cameroonians are, the refugees and asylum seekers in Cameroon are mainly from Nigeria, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo, Sudan, Burundi, etc. The ongoing crises in Nigeria, CAR and other parts of Cameroon continue to forcefully displace people from their homes, exacerbate humanitarian needs, put pressure on resources, and worsen living conditions in the host communities.

The crisis in Cameroon continues undiminished, and the affected population continues to face increasing hardship. They continue to live with great volatility and daily threats to their health and safety due to ongoing counterinsurgency operations, among other factors. The conflict in the Far North (FN) has worsened due to added friction and hostilities between farmers and pastoralists, over natural resources. This includes water points and grazing land in hotspots of Logone et Chari, Mayo Sava et Mayo Tsanaga. The hostilities escalated into intercommunal clashes and full-scale fighting, displacing some 35,000 persons in the region and another 9,000 forced to flee to Chad. Many of the displaced remain under situations of protracted and secondary displacements.

The protracted conflict in the North West (NW) and South West (SW) Regions is exacerbated by the activities of the Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) who continue to perpetrate acts of violence and asymmetric attacks against the State Security Forces (SSF) and indiscriminately target civilians. These NSAGs have carried out criminal activities such as banditry, killings, abductions, extortion/imposition of illegal taxation, etc. Lack of protection and humanitarian intervention for the population in inaccessible areas remains a serious protection concern.

Arbitrary arrests and extortion continued to be the two highest reported incidents, with torture and GBV, including conflict related sexual violence coming in third and fourth. The key alleged perpetrators were NSAGs and State Security Forces (SSF)².

The Protection needs are arduous, especially for women and girls, who still lack adequate protection and access to basic services, and are at risk of violence, abduction, rape, gender-based violence, forced and child marriage, and other violations of their rights. Child protection concerns are also enormous, especially for unaccompanied and separated children, and those formerly associated with armed groups.

¹ Sources – OCHA, IOM and UNHCR at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>

² Human Rights Report

The humanitarian and operational environment in Cameroon remains extremely unpredictable. All the major supply routes remain dangerous for civilians and humanitarian workers alike, as well as for the delivery of humanitarian assistance by road. The protection environment requires an increase in funding, given that humanitarian funding has been on a steady decline. The 2024-2026 Strategy will make the most of the limited resources and capacity, as well as work with community-based structures to build their capacity to respond to some protection risks at their level. The strategy will ensure this is done collectively, targeting the most vulnerable, empowering local actors, and prioritizing protection response given the expected funding gaps.

In line with the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) guidance, and consistently with its terms of reference, the Protection Sector in the Republic of Cameroon strives to address the critical needs of conflict-affected populations and strengthen protection response, coordination, and search for durable solutions for internally displaced persons. Thus, the protection sector strategy considers the existing work plans for the sector in Yaounde, FN, and the cluster in NW/SW, including specific opportunities and challenges of the protection response in the country. The Protection Sector its Areas of Responsibility (AoRs): Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Child Protection (CP) and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) will provide guidance and support to the sector and cluster, to facilitate the implementation of this strategy, within the relevant context of the regions.

Protection Context, Risks and Challenges

The operational environment remains unstable in all the three conflict-affected regions of Cameroon. Overall, 90% of the country (that is nine out of the ten regions) face three complex humanitarian crises which include the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) crisis, the NW & SW Regions, and the CAR crisis producing refugees in the East Region.

These statistics have been supported by the findings of the Multi Sectorial Need Assessment (MSNA) of February 2023 conducted in the Far North North-West, South-West, Littoral, West, Adamawa, and Centre regions.

As the LCB situation continues to deteriorate due to the activities of Boko Haram, communal conflicts, and the effects of climate change, over 796,000 people have been displaced in 2023, signaling a significant increase in the number of forcibly displaced in the FN in 2023 compared to 607,000 recorded the same period in 2022. The conflict in the FN has worsened also due to added friction and hostilities between farmers and pastoralists for competition over natural resources which includes water points and grazing land in hotspots of Logone et Chari, Mayo Sava et Mayo Tsanaga divisions. The hostilities escalated into inter-communal clashes and full-scale fighting in the last quarter of August 2021, displacing some 35,000 within the region, and another 9,000 forced to flee to Chad. Many of the displaced populations remain under situations of secondary displacements. The climatic changes in the FN Region have aggravated the situation of the forcibly displacement, which has seen unprecedented flooding and drought in 2022. This has further burdened communities facing multiple displacement scenarios.

In the NW and SW, the crisis has displaced some 607,000 IDPs as of 30th November 2023. The systemization of ghost towns and lockdowns, recurrent armed clashes between soldiers and armed groups, and other security and protection incidents are contributing to the near collapse of the school system and socio-economic disintegration. Protection monitoring reports confirm that 75% of the incidents are perpetrated by NSAGs³. In the Eastern Region, there are some 354,837 CAR refugees and 9,495 asylum seekers from UNHCR data produced in November 2023 confirms that there are currently some 2,222,612 persons in need of protection in Cameroon. These steadily increasing numbers of persons seeking international protection exert additional pressure on existing systems and natural resources of the host country.

Over the past couple of years, a disturbing trend has been targeted attacks against health centres. This impedes access to civilian casualties in need of critical health care after a protection incident. On at least six occasions in 2022, NSAGs in the FN perpetrated violence impacting health care. A health centre was set on fire and health workers killed or kidnapped by armed groups/bandits. On at least one occasion in May 2022, an armed group stole medical equipment and medicines from a health facility and then set the building on fire, thereby discouraging professionals from entering the healthcare sector³. The kidnapping, killing, and arrest of health workers have long-term impact on quality and timeliness of medical assistance. Under such hostile conditions, the regions experienced a reduction in staff. In addition, the temporary closure of health facilities resulted in thousands of civilians being deprived of essential health care.

Pendular movements and including forced displacement of the population and communities are reported within the country and between the neighbouring countries of Nigeria and Chad. In 2023, considerable movement was also observed in the NW/SW, West, and Littoral Regions.

The displaced populations have not received adequate assistance in a coordinated manner from the humanitarian actors. This was the finding of the MSNA carried out in Kerawa and Mora, led by the protection sector in February and May 2023. The lack of assistance is the most cited reason for continuous displacements in the conflict-affected areas. Protection actors reached a total of 85,277 persons with assistance in the Northwest and Southwest (NWSW) and Far North regions between July – September 2023. Planning response for the populations constantly on the move has been a major challenge in both Far North and NWSW regions as reported in the 4th Quarter of 2023.

According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview, (HNO) 2023, 4.7 million people (predominantly women and children) in Cameroon required humanitarian response in 2023. Conversely, a decrease in PiN has been assessed at 3.5 M in 2024. In the HRP, 2 million persons need protection, but only 1.4 million are targeted for assistance in 2024. The main overarching objectives for the protection sector in the HRP were: (i) Improve the protection and respect for the fundamental rights of persons affected by crisis; (ii)

³ Safeguarding health in conflict, Cameroon, violence against health care in conflict, 2022.

Increase access to quality life-saving and coordinated GBV response to survivors of GBV; (iii) Improve the protection environment for children and to ensure their protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect and (iv) Promote the Centrality of Protection (CoP), and Protection Mainstreaming across all sectors/humanitarian response cycle.

With protracted conflicts and crisis going in the NW/SW and FN Regions, the population movements will also continue, along with the negative consequences on people's lives. Making the environment more hostile and exacerbating protection incidents. This will negatively impact the quality services, availability, and access. Protection actors and humanitarian response have faced challenges with frequent lockdowns imposed by NSAGs, ongoing military operations and/or access constraints due to natural disasters causing road infrastructure. The security deterioration has drastically exacerbated GBV, particularly for women and girls, and extra-judicial killings which have been reported in the NW/SW and Regions. Men are also targeted by protection incidents like killing, kidnapping, torture, arbitrary arrests, physical assaults, and thefts.

The crisis in Cameroon is a protection crisis which requires adequate funding for response, through protection service delivery (including services such as case management, which is very resource intensive). Currently, available funding is mostly allocated to prevention-related activities through awareness-raising and sensitization. Evidence based data is critical to making the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon a priority for donors and funding, however, the sector has faced challenges in the timely collection of data and analysis because of the chronic lack of information management capacity. Consequently, the sector has been unable to secure adequate fundings to enhance protection service delivery.

Protection Cluster Objectives

The Protection Sector Cluster's strategic objectives are in line with the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan and the HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy, 2023. The three overarching objectives have been selected by the cluster and focus on collective and collaborative activities and approaches across the Protection Sector and AoRs. The three objectives focus on mitigation of protection risks, strengthening services to provide protection response, and strengthening the protection environment.

- **Objective 1:** To mitigate and respond to the harm caused to persons who have suffered violence, coercion, exploitation, serious neglect, or discrimination, and to restore their capacity to live safe and dignified lives.
- **Objective 2:** To strengthen targeted protection services to address the needs and vulnerability of persons at heightened risk of violence, exploitation, serious neglect, or discrimination; enhance their capacities and reduce the risk of resorting to negative coping mechanisms.
- **Objective 3:** To strengthen the protection environment through the identification, monitoring and strengthening of risk reduction strategies of the affected

population, legal and political systems as well as the capacity of local actors to respond to protection concerns.

Through the above objectives, the Protection Sector will focus on issues of grave violations alongside its AoRs, to address protection risks. The grave violations against children include killing and maiming, attacks on schools, forcible recruitment by armed forces and fighting groups, rape and sexual violence, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access. The Sector will respond according to gravity or needs, depending on the Sector's member's capacity/funding/mandate and the humanitarian context. The Protection Cluster strategy is complementary to existing AoR strategies and designed to influence the Cluster's contribution to the –2024 Humanitarian Response Plan for Cameroon.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Protection Sector/Cluster Cameroon coordinates the Protection Sector in Far North and Protection Cluster in the Northwest and Southwest regions. The Protection Sector is accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in reports both to the HCT and ISWG. Protection is a standing agenda on the HCT agenda.
- The Protection Cluster Cameroon provides the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the National Humanitarian Coordination Forum strategic advice and ensures coordination of protection and the AoRs on Child Protection (CP), Gender-Based Violence, (GBV), and Housing, Land and Property, (HLP).
- The Protection Sector Coordinator and Co-Coordinators and the AoR Coordinators will ensure the implementation of the strategy in a collaborative manner and in collaboration with other relevant sectors.
- The Protection Cluster will seek guidance from, liaise and share relevant information with the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) as and when required.
- The Protection Cluster and AoRs will conduct mapping and gaps analysis to assess the effectiveness and coverage of the response.

Protection Response Priorities

Priority Affected Groups

General protection activities will prioritize the following categories of people identified in the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan⁴. Those demographics identified as being most at risk of protection violations and in need of protection and humanitarian: includes IDPs, Refugees, Returnees, and Host Communities. General protection services will also target people based on their critical needs and not status, and will also target the most vulnerable who are facing protection threats, using the Age, Gender and Diversity, AGD approach to encompass persons of all ages and genders children (under 18), women and adolescent girls and boys (aged 12-19); a particular focus will be on responding to

⁴ Cameroon Humanitarian Response Plan 2024.

persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) and the elderly and minority groups. The Protection Sector will ensure that disability inclusion is integrated in all protection activities and will advocate for mainstreaming across all sectors.

Protection Monitoring

With the protracted conflict and the prevailing displacement situation in the conflict-affected regions in Cameroon, the systemization of ghost towns and lockdowns (NW/SW), recurrent armed clashes between SSF and NSAGs, including other security and protection incidents, are contributing to the serious disruption of the school system (NW/SW) and socio-economic disintegration.

There has been an increase in protection incidents and attacks on civilian populations. A comparative analysis between 2022 and 2023, shows that by August 2023, some 4,787 incidents were reported in that one month alone, which was the entire number of incidents in 2022, which stood at 4,584. A sampling of the cases shows that 898 were protection related incidents. UNDSS reports indicated a 38% increase between August 2022 and August 2023. unlawful arrests and arbitrary detention, destruction of property, targeted killings, gender-based violence, recruitment of children and youth by NSAGs, as well as other grave violations against children. Freedom of movement is seriously restricted due to frequent lockdowns, checkpoints, and attacks on commuter transportation. This exposes the affected populations to heightened protection risks in the NW/SW, and FN Regions which disrupts daily lives.

The ability to rebuild lives and engage in socio-economic opportunities has become very challenging, as populations are uprooted repeatedly by the ongoing pervasive insecurity. Many victims of human rights violations cannot access legal services as many of the systems tasked with recording vital statistics were destroyed and or partially operational. Other factors which hamper legal recourse include prohibitive costs. Many indigents simply do not have money to pursue expensive legal services and as such cannot claim nor defend their rights. The lack of civil servants, notably judicial and administrative staff, undermines the administration of justice and the rule of law as many such staff were directly targeted and forced to flee in search of safety.

Protection monitoring and community-based protection mechanisms are critical to support the identification of people in need of protection and to advocate for humanitarian assistance. Evidence based data and reporting is needed to advocate and mobilize resources/fund to enable actors respond to the protection crisis in Cameroon.

Under the Protection Cluster Strategy, actors will respond to protection concerns identified through protection monitoring, coordinating with community-based protection mechanisms, and ensuring referrals of the most vulnerable individuals to other sectors for specialized services and appropriate response, in urban and rural areas. The protection sector will also report, and document protection concerns and human rights violations. In addition, refugees, IDPs, returnees and host community members will be identified and included in the provision of humanitarian services.

Protection actors will use the available protection monitoring information also, to contribute to the drafting of regular protection analysis, and the identification of protection risks, incidents, threats, or updates which are critical in formulating responses at the inter-sector level, for strategic guidance under the HCT.

Key priorities for protection monitoring include the following:

- Protection actors commit to continue carrying out protection monitoring, to ensure that key protection concerns are documented.
- Protection sector actors will collect data using various harmonized advanced tools on data information management, to compile and provide evidence-based analysis, to inform decision-making and response. In 2024, the Project 21 protection monitoring tool will be adopted in Cameroon by key cluster members implementing protection monitoring. This will allow the use of a harmonized tool and methodology for data collection, for more coherent and comparable data, to generate joint analysis of the protection situation, risks, and trends. This will strengthen coordinated evidence-based advocacy and response.
- Capacitate the Protection Monitoring Task Force, to reinforce coordination among protection monitoring actors on data collection and harmonization of tools, analysis, and protection indicators to monitor.
- The collection and compilation of quantitative and qualitative data to provide accurate data and information on the numbers and demographics of the affected population using various IM tools such as monthly dashboards, weekly situation reports and monthly updates to track and report on protection trends. This evidence-based data will be used for advocacy, fundraising and resource mobilization.

Protection of Civilians

Armed groups also continue to carry out indiscriminate attacks against civilians, at times burning down entire villages, and forcing populations to flee. The increase in security and protection incidents presents a grave concern as it adversely affects all facets of life for displaced populations in the Northwest and Southwest. July 2023 recorded the highest number of incidents with 1528 cases in any single month in one year. In February 2024, 308 protection incidents were recorded in the northwest and southwest regions, a 20% increase in from January 2024: Torture and inhumane treatment (*91 incidents*), destruction of property (*57 incidents*) and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (*41 incidents*) were the top three reported incidents. 64.4% of the victims were male (including boys), while 35.6% were female (including girls).

In the FN Region, isolated reports of improvised explosive devices, claiming civilian casualties were reported in 2023 and continues in 2024. Many of the victims of explosive devices are mostly children. In March 2023, it was reported 6 children were killed in two separate incidents as they were foraging for scrap metal in dumpsters. Some children

have often picked up shiny objects, which were unexploded ordnances which exploded resulting in the death of some of these children. The importance of carrying out mine risk awareness is reiterated in this strategy and must be prioritized to mitigate against civilian casualties in 2024.

Other forms of violations perpetrated against individuals and communities are rampant killings and maiming of civilians, destruction of private and public property and infrastructure, theft, looting, forced labor, abduction and forced recruitment of children, and extortion. Sexual violence and rape are known to be routinely committed during attacks on civilians. Many cases of conflict related sexual violence, CRSV, go unreported and for the fact that victims rarely seek medical services.

The protection of children from effects of armed conflict remains a grave concern given the deliberate targeting of schools, children, and staff. Violent incidents increased drastically in 2023 with at least 16 attacks against schools' reports.

Women, children, Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWD), older persons, and minority groups face specific risks. During the 2024 HNO, food security needs captured by the Cadre Harmonize projected that 1 million additional persons are in food insecurity. Most of the triggers for food insecurity remain lack of access to farmlands due to restriction of movement, ongoing conflict between the warring parties, climatic change, and chronic poverty. A combination of these factors renders the displaced populations extremely vulnerable to protection risks and human rights violations, including a noticeable increase in Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Many cases of Intimate Partner Violence, (IPV), Sexual Violence, and Denial of Resources continue to be reported. From January to October 2023 the GBV/IMS show that 66 per cent of GBV cases assisted are IPV, 17 per cent are sexual violence, 34 per cent denial of resources and 22 per cent physical violence, and 4 per cent forced marriage. According to qualitative assessment carried out by the GBV AoR "The voices from Cameroon" conducted in 2022 - 2023 and published in 2024, by GBV AoR, established that 100 per cent of Focus Group Discussions confirmed that sexual violence is a major concern for women and girls while 92 per cent reported domestic violence. GBV is under-reported. However, cases of rape and sexual exploitation are often reported in by the GBVIMS, safety audit and The Voices of Cameroon reports. From the assessment, many women who have experienced violence reported that they suffer psychological and emotional effects, including trauma, depression and suicidal thoughts, low self-worth, frustration, stigma, and loss of hope. They often live in constant fear, which affects their day-to-day lives. Gender-based violence contributes to health issues, causes physical injuries, hypertension, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, abortion and even death. Many women and girls have had to make significant changes in their daily lives due to the fear of violence. They alter their clothing, avoid certain areas, and restrict their activities. This leads to a decrease in women's participation in community activities. Unfortunately, timely response to many of the critical cases have not been

adequate because of the lack of adequate resources, coupled with operational presence and breakdown of global supply chain on the procurement of PEP kits.

Access to Justice (Legal identity and Civil Documents).

Many persons in need of civil and identity documents face phenomenal challenges in obtaining them due to the lack of financial resources and related costs. Furthermore, in the NW/SW Regions 'forcibly displaced people face severe challenges. Indeed, civil status centers are non-functional in several locations due to the crisis. This has consequences on their freedom of movement. IDPs face challenges for their ID cards to be reissued, when they cannot produce birth certificates because one can apply for such documents only in their civil status center of origin. Finally, people are faced with competing requests from the SSF, state authorities, and the NSAGs. Persons who do not possess any identification are often arrested by SSF if found and persecuted by the NSAGs if caught with such documents. This has exposed many, predominantly boys and men to arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention. The lack of birth certificates denies children their right access education, as they cannot register for examinations without such documents. This further puts many children at the risk of statelessness.

Specific interventions aimed at providing access to justice and civil documents are essential to address the gap in the protection response for members of the affected population. There are some demographics who require urgent legal assistance and counselling, for issues flagged through protection monitoring activities. Births and deaths must be registered, land and inheritance matters need to be resolved, matrimonial and family disputes require arbitration and suspects in criminal cases brought by the State and processed through the judicial system need legal representation.

The protection actors have cited recurrent and specific obstacles undermining the provision of access to justice for the affected population. Such factors include lack of institutional support, and adequate resources.

The need for civil and legal documentation remains critical in 2024, to protect especially men and boys from arbitrary detention and arrest. In general, this is due to their perceived greater involvement in the conflicts. The protection sector will support government efforts on the issuance of civil documentation, which will improve the enrolment of children in schools. The issuance of birth certificates in health centers is one way of addressing this gap. 10, 000 children will be targeted in this process as well as 75,000 refugees.

The key priorities for access to justice and civil documentation in 2024 include:

- Engage with the Cameroonian Human Rights Commission.
- Engage with the Bar association including the Federation of Female Lawyers.
- Engage with the Ministry of Justice, and advocate for the domestication of the Kampala Convention, and other legal reform policies.
- Advocate and support efforts aimed at addressing barriers that undermine the acquisition of civil and legal documentation for the affected populations.

- Provide technical expertise and support to institutions.
- Strengthen mechanisms like the Civil Documentation Task Force at regional level and establishment of a Task Force at national level.
- Engage with government counterparts to advocate for reduction and harmonization of costs.
- Sensitization of communities on the importance of civil documentation
- Strengthening of community-based mechanisms.

Child Protection

The situation of children in Cameroon.

Cameroon's population is predominantly young, with half of the population under 19.⁵ Children are at high risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, family separation, and significant psychosocial needs. Children in the NW/SW and FN Regions face the risk of forced recruitment due to the conflict, extreme poverty, security threats, and lack of education opportunities. Due to insecurity and population movements, many children have been forced to flee their villages, sometimes being witnesses or victims of violence leading to high levels of stress and trauma, including significant negative consequences to their cognitive and emotional development.

Of the almost 1.2 million people displaced within the NW/SW Regions,⁶ 62 per cent are children. According to the Multi Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) R9, more than 37,000 unaccompanied and separated children were reported in 2023 in the North-West and South-West regions, and in the Littoral and West regions. It is assumed that the number of unaccompanied and separated children is even higher, because family separation is a major threat in this crisis; a direct consequence of attacks on villages, which forces family members to scatter, but also the need of these families to seek economic opportunities in other areas/ regions. Another reason is children being sent to urban centers to continue their education. Some of these children are involved in some of the worst forms of child labor and are even forced into engaging in survival sex in exchange for food and shelter.

The CP AoR strategy aims for a future in which all children are free from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices. This vision aligns with the themes of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and is aligned with the concept of human security and the existing national laws.

The Child Protection actors will prioritize and coordinate timely responses to the protection needs of hundreds of thousands of children who are victims of violence, and those associated with armed groups. This will be done through mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), Case Management, PSEA, GBV risks

⁵ Situational analysis report, MINPROFF, revised in 2020.

⁶ There are 368,742 IDPs within the North

prevention and mitigation services, as well System Strengthening (capacity building of Government partners and Community Based Child Protection mechanisms). The lack of civil documentation which denies many children accessing basic services (education) will also be addressed.

The CP AoR targets all children from IDPs, refugees, returnees, and host communities in humanitarian settings, so they can be protected from violence, abuse, and exploitation.

The Child Protection actors will prioritize and coordinate timely responses to the protection needs of hundreds of thousands of children who cannot access education; address the lack of civil documentation which denies them urgent needs, and deal with the underlying structural causes, including poverty and gender disparity.

To achieve this goal beyond its traditional role of the coordination of child protection activities, the CP AoR will focus on prevention and response to child protection risks, in line with child protection minimum standards in humanitarian settings, considering inclusion and equity, inclusion and the nexus approach, while building on localization.

The CP AoR will reinforce child protection systems through the following priorities.

1. Improvement of access to qualitative services for boys and girls, at risk or victims of abuse and violence in humanitarian setting, through Case Management, including alternative care arrangements and referral services to multi sectoral responses for children at risk or experiencing Child Protection (CP) concerns.
2. Prevention of violence and promotion of positive social norms and behaviors of through dissemination of the Positive parenting Programme, for parents, caregivers, children, and communities, to protect children and women from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harmful practices. This will be implemented through the reinforcement of child protection community-based approach, through engagement of existing communities' structures.
3. Capacity building/strengthening of child protection partners and social welfare workforce, to deliver equitable, quality prevention and response services through a strengthened child protection system.
4. Implementation of the Action Plan of the recommendations on the needs of children associated in armed groups, in or out of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process.
5. Leverage existing partnerships with Donors, the Government, Private sector for strategy advocacy and funding for child protection.

Gender-Based Violence

The findings from various assessments and studies carried out by protection actors show that customary beliefs and traditions are the most powerful drivers of GBV. Assessment and analysis conducted in the FN by the protection sector have shown that denial of resources and emotional violence account for over 41% of GBV cases in the FN. This shows that culture and tradition continue to deny women access to education, wellbeing and decision-making platforms, ownership of household goods and family wealth, housing, land and property, and natural resources, which make women vulnerable. By addressing the root causes of deeply entrenched discrimination, GBV AoR partners can tangibly target the source of women's vulnerability.

GBV is rarely reported largely due to the resultant stigma and discrimination faced by the survivors. A lot of efforts have gone into institutional strengthening in this regard. As the crisis protracts and the security situation deteriorates further, thousands of women and girls continue to suffer, and as they perform their domestic chores, fetching firewood and forced to go outside their settlements. Many have reported being attacked and sexually molested by unidentified armed men. Survivors of GBV decry persistent gaps in livelihoods, food security and supply, access to justice, and medical services in some locations. Empirical evidence shows that women and girls have been the most targeted in incidents of abductions, forced/child marriages. GBV has been prevalent during the insurgency in Cameroon and has disproportionately affected women and girls because of their gender.

The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action) is a ground-breaking global initiative to fundamentally transform the way gender-based violence (GBV) is addressed in humanitarian action. The aim is to drive change and foster accountability so that every humanitarian effort, from the earliest phases of a crisis, includes the policies, systems, and mechanisms necessary to prevent, mitigate, and respond to GBV, especially violence against women and girls.

In line with the global strategy, the objectives of the GBV AoR in Cameroon are to respond to GBV through increased access to quality life-saving and well-coordinated GBV response services for all GBV survivors, enhance GBV prevention and risk mitigation in humanitarian response efforts and strengthened community-based resilience through increased support to Women Led Organizations.

key priorities for GBV in 2024 include:

- Provision of holistic support to survivors of GBV
- Strengthened capacity of GBV service providers in case management, including MHPSS
- Safety audits and risk and vulnerability mapping for GBV

- Strengthened GBV prevention activities at the community level, including sensitization of conflict-affected communities, local authorities, traditional leaders, and religious leaders.
- Reinforced GBV prevention through gender transformative approaches and male engagement
- Provision of basic vocational training, economic support and dedicated livelihood activities to women and girls
- Capacity building for women's organizations on GBV response, prevention, and coordination in the humanitarian context.

Housing Land and Property

In the Far North region, N, IDPs and the host community members require interventions to secure their access to HLP or tenure. There is a lack of awareness of the rights and obligations to prevent forced eviction and secondary occupation. In addition, gender discrimination against women and girls and tradition denies them the right to access land and or even to inherit property. This exposes women and girls to acute protection risks, related to inadequate housing, exploitation by landlords and communities hosting the IDPs. Many such instances of inadequate housing and exploitation were observed also in the Littoral region. The major challenges to access and enjoyment of HLP rights in the Northwest and Southwest include the deliberate destruction of properties, forcing many persons into situation of secondary displacements/occupation and insecurity of tenure. Men, boys, women, and girls living under such situations are often at heightened risk of eviction and instances of land grabbing. The lack of land title and property deeds, make it complicated for IDPs and returnees to claim their rights or to own houses, land, and property. The existing traditional land dispute resolution mechanisms are not functioning fully and need a lot of support to be fully functional.

It is envisaged that additional resources, the capacity of the HLP AoR will be strengthened. That HLP activities will be extended to cover more communities and efforts will focus on HLP issues affecting mainly displaced persons. In the Far North, efforts will focus on increasing the security of tenure for IDPs and preventing forced eviction. More activities on raising awareness will target IDPs and host populations on HLP rights and obligations as well as building the capacity of stakeholders to prevent and address HLP disputes. These activities will enhance peacebuilding and improve social cohesion and peaceful co-existence in the various communities facing inter-communal conflicts and competition over natural resources.

The Key Priorities for HLP include:

- Provision of individual legal assistance to beneficiaries to exercise the enjoyment of HLP rights.
- Provision of individual counselling on HLP-related issues.
- Sensitization of community, local authorities, and traditional leaders on HLP rights and obligations.

- Training of local authorities' traditional leaders and civil society actors to effectively address HLP-related disputes.

Protection Mainstreaming, Capacity Building,

Mainstreaming protection ensures that the protective impact of humanitarian programming is maximized through the incorporation of protection principles into the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian actors can ensure that their activities target the most vulnerable, enhance safety, and dignity, and promote and protect human rights of the affected population, without contributing to or perpetuating discrimination, abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation.

The Protection cluster and AoRs will work jointly with other clusters to ensure that protection training and capacity enhancement are mainstreamed in the delivery of their programs. The cluster will develop a capacity-building program (training) for key actors, including security forces, on key international humanitarian standards, international protection, and human rights, as well as the civilian and humanitarian character of camps. The cluster will also sensitize humanitarian and military actors on civil-military coordination to protect and promote humanitarian principles in coordination with key stakeholders such as the ICRC and OCHA Civil-Military Coordination Unit.

The cluster will prioritize the centrality of protection by ensuring the participation of affected persons in the planning and implementation of solutions, considering age, gender, and diversity, and paying particular attention to persons with specific needs. In line with the action plan for the implementation of the HCT Protection Strategy.

To ensure that the centrality of protection is realized across all sectors, the sector/cluster will regularly update members of other sectors and clusters bilaterally and at the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group meeting, ICCG on the implementation of the HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy. The Sector will also work with other sectors to ensure protection mainstreaming and coordination are included in the protection response.

Coordinated Response Mechanism and fundraising.

a. Support Legal Policy and reform.

The situation of children formerly associated with armed groups in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process, has been prioritized by the National Commission for Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (NDDRC), IOM and UNICEF and the Handover Protocol validated at the political level.

Discussions are underway to domesticate the Kampala Convention to provide timely assistance to the thousands of Cameroonians who have been forcibly displaced. The Protection Cluster and its AoRs will continue to support the government of Cameroon to domesticate the convention.

b. Legal framework

Cameroon is a party to many international human rights instruments, including the International Bill of Human Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Cameroon has ratified the 2009 Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The country also participates in the Regional Protection Dialogue on the Lake Chad Basin, which was adopted in the 2016 Abuja Action Statement, and the 2019 related to the Reaffirmation of the commitments of the Abuja Action Statement and their Implementation. More recently, Cameroon signed the Yaoundé Declaration in April 2022 on the 7 countries hosting CAR refugees. Protection Cluster AoRs will continue to support the government of Cameroon to meet its obligations under international treaties.

c. Age, Gender, and Diversity Approach across all sectors.

The Protection Sector in responding to the needs of displaced populations adopts the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) Module. The Protection risks of displaced persons will be mitigated following the community-based protection monitoring through the (AGD) approaches. The Protection Sector conducts assessments at the household and community level which will strengthen the ability and capacity of affected persons to report cases and provide feedback on assistance provided. This will be done using the existing community-based structures. Protection monitoring will enhance the timely identification and referral of persons with specific needs and inform eligibility for assistance. Vulnerability screening will be carried out to determine the situation of women and children at risk, persons living with disabilities, disability inclusion, the elderly, persons with chronic medical conditions and survivors of GBV will be considered in determining eligibility and prioritized for

assistance. Through these interventions, the protection actors will improve the well-being of the displaced persons.

d. Protection Mainstreaming

The Protection Sector/Cluster in Cameroon will ensure informed targeting, inclusive programming, participation of the affected populations, and gender equality will be applied as a core value for all agencies in the operational area. The protection cluster encourages actors to:

- i. Appointment of protection focal point in different ministries
- ii. Appointment of protection focal point across all sectors, double-hatting roles (of already appointed PSEA focal point) and government counterpart.
- iii. Organize at least one joint workshop on protection mainstreaming at the national level, targeting other sectors and at the regional level continue with the protection mainstreaming workshop for the inter-cluster coordination group.

e. Access to quality services/ Access to services to the affected population.

The various crises continue to significantly increase the risk of GBV. Domestic violence, sexual violence, physical and emotional violence, and denial of resources are widespread. Deteriorating living conditions and loss of livelihoods increase negative coping strategies, including forced marriages, survival sex and other high-risk activities such as wood gathering. The protection Cluster will encourage the actors to:

- i. Increase and improve access to lifesaving GBV services for all the survivors.
- ii. Reinforce GBV prevention and risk mitigation for a more protective environment for women and girls.

F: Roll out a Call to action on addressing GBV.

The Call to Action (CtA) on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action) is a ground-breaking global initiative to fundamentally transform the way gender-based violence (GBV) is addressed in humanitarian action.

This strategy cannot be achieved without the involvement of all humanitarian actors. The HCT has shared its' vision and commitment by endorsing a general action to prevent and respond to GBV as highlighted in the GBV accountability framework.

The HCT Centrality of Protection developed in 2023 has prioritized The Call to Action against Gender-based Violence GBV as one of the 3 priorities for all sectors to adopt specific measures to mitigate GBV risks.

f. Monitoring of violation of Children's Rights

Children in Cameroon continue to face grave violations of their rights including killing, attacks on schools and health facilities, Child labor and arbitrary arrest and detention over non-possession of civil documentation. Child Protection AoR will focus on prevention measures and sustainable solutions to address these multiple protection issues faced by children, through Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms. Priority will be given to addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Case Management - two of the highest priority needs in 2024.

Strengthening evidence-based advocacy by Protection Analysis

The Protection actors commit to continue to carry out protection monitoring to ensure that key protection concerns are reported.

The Sector actors will collect data, using harmonized protection monitoring data collection tools on data information management, to compile and provide evidence-based analysis and response, to inform decision-making and for advocacy purposes.

The collection and compilation of quantitative and qualitative data, via needs assessments, and clear information sharing among protection members as well as other sectoral partners, is paramount. There will be regular provision of accurate data and information on the numbers and demographics of the affected population, using various IM tools such as monthly dashboards, weekly situation reports and monthly updates, not only to track and report on progress made but also to analyze trends and anticipate adequate response. This includes partner mapping and conducting gaps analysis to assess the effectiveness and coverage of the response and a tool for fundraising and resource mobilization.

The introduction of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+) in Cameroon, led by the Government - MINAS- with the support of UNICEF will promote a more holistic approach to the prevention and response to the violations of children's rights.

g. Improve the access to civil documentation.

52,000 will need civil and legal documentation in 2024 in the NW& SW and Far North regions. The issuance of civil documents and legal identity will enhance and protect men and boys from arbitrary detention and arrest. Additionally, the issuance of civil documentation will improve the enrolment of children in schools. The issuance of birth certificates in health centers is one way of addressing this gap. 45,100 children will be targeted in this process.

CP AoR led by UNICEF is in discussion with the Government on finding sustainable ways to address the Civil Documentation issue in April 24, 2024. Plans are underway for a Forum on Birth Registration which will bring all 364 Mayors in the country and other stakeholders to adopt a Charter on prioritizing Birth Registration in municipalities' strategic planning.

The protection Sector will encourage actors to:

- i. Provide technical expertise and support to institutions.
- ii. Strengthen mechanisms like the Civil Documentation Task Force
- iii. Engage with government counterparts to advocate for the reduction and harmonization of costs.
- iv. Sensitization of the communities on the importance of the civil documentation and strengthening of community-based mechanisms

h. Enhancing access to justice for victims of human rights violations

As armed groups continue to carry out indiscriminate attacks against civilians, burning down entire villages, populations are forced to flee. In the Far North, some isolated reports of improvised explosive devices (IED), claiming civilian casualties continue.

To enhance access for the victims of these heinous crimes, the Sector will coordinate legal assistance with other legal experts and will:

- Engage with the Cameroonian Human Rights Commission
- Engage with the Bar association including the Federation of Female Lawyers
- Engage with the Ministry of Justice, and advocate for the domestication of the Kampala Convention, and other legal reform and policy.

i. New Ways of Working

In the implementation of the Protection Strategy, the sector will work with Partners to undertake a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that will help all parties to respond to funding urgencies. Based on recognized Frameworks for Evaluation of response:

- by tracking and responding to population movements, joint activities with IOM/OCHA will be implemented involving all sectors, through multi-sectoral needs assessments and multi-agency joint missions carried out in the Far North, NWSW, West in Littoral to gather information on the protection needs of displaced populations.
- Work with other sectors, consistently with the shared desire to build impactful partnerships.
- Advance the localization agenda and foster close partnerships with local actors.
- Search for, propose, develop and support durable solutions for the mixed situation on internal displacement in Cameroon.

- Engage with development actors and adopt the nexus approach between humanitarian-development and support the transition.
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Fundraising

The Protection cluster will put in place a robust fundraising strategy and advocate for more funding for protection mainstreaming across all sectors. Based on the centrality of protection, all projects submitted for CERF (including under-funded emergencies) and country-based pooled funding will have to prioritize and manifest commitment to mainstreaming protection activities.

Given the operating environment and context, the Protection Sector Strategy proposed objectives hereunder are meant to be incrementally implemented with the necessary safeguards being put in place with a greater determination for a coordinated response.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Protection Sector and AoRs will conduct joint field visits to protection project delivery sites in the conflict-affected regions (FN, SW/NW), with the objective of monitoring and providing support to protection actors. Protection monitoring, participatory assessments, interviews, and focus group discussions will be conducted, and the Cluster and AoRs will conduct regular analysis of the impact of the various projects.

The M&E will be done with the participation of selected IDP, refugee, returnee, and host community members. As part of the evaluation process, the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) will meet on a bimonthly basis or on an ad hoc manner when convoked to monitor progress, identify challenges/gaps, and make recommendations as deemed appropriate.

This strategy has been presented to all members of the Protection Sector/Cluster on 18th April 2024 after being endorsed by the Technical Working Team on 13th March 2024.

The coordinators will present to Sector and Cluster members, on a regular basis the progress made in the Sector Plan of Action. The Strategy will guide the work of the Sector and Clusters as well as track the implementation of the Work Plan. This will be discussed and reviewed quarterly – or biannually at the Protection Cluster mid-year. The SAG shall evaluate the strategy before the end of 2025 and share the feedback, including recommendations, with the Protection Cluster and AoRs.

Protection Cluster 2024 Action Plan



Strategic Objective 1: To mitigate and respond to the harm caused to persons who have suffered violence, coercion, exploitation, serious neglect, or discrimination, and to restore their capacity to live safe and dignified lives.

AoR	Protection Response Activity	Timeline
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify specific threats (such as violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation), but also assess the severity of threats to different groups in different locations and mitigate them through enhancing community capacity and eradicating barriers to services. - Advocate with other actors, including governments, to galvanize support for people with protection concerns, including with other sectors where necessary. - Work with key protection partners to train other sector members, on the prevention and response to key protection concerns documented by the Sector. - Ensure effective service delivery through the development of a referral mechanism 	
Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children at risk (boys and girls) including adolescents, and children with disabilities access preventive and comprehensive quality response services promptly. - Parents, caregivers, children, and communities promote positive social norms and adopt behaviours that protect children and women from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and harmful practices. 	
GBV	<p>Improve access to quality lifesaving and well-coordinated GBV response services for survivors and individuals at risk through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of GBV case management and specialized services, i.e., medical – including psychiatric services, psychosocial services, access to justice, safety options and security mechanisms. - Establishment and running of safe shelter facilities and referral (one-stop centres) – with survivor-centric Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), establishment and functioning of women-, girl- and youth-friendly spaces. - Strengthening capacity for immediate response to meet the unique needs of women, girls, boys, and men formerly abducted and/or 	

	<p>associated with armed conflict including appropriate responses to address Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening of the leadership and coordination of the GBV AoR at the state and local levels to increase strong partnership and participation. 	
HLP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide technical guidance to customary justice actors, displaced community leaders, humanitarian, early recovery and peacebuilding partners, and national/state authorities through the distribution of HLP-related topics. - Strengthen the capacity of line ministries through the provision of material and technical support to enhance their capacity to respond to HLP issues. - Provide support to dispute resolution structures especially the traditional leadership structure, which plays a big role in mediating and resolving disputes among families and communities. Such support will include capacity-building training on CDR to complement HLP training and promote cohesion as opposed to social fracture. 	
<p>Strategic Objective 2: To strengthen targeted protection services to address the needs and vulnerability of persons at heightened risks of violence, exploitation, serious neglect, or discrimination; enhance their capacities and reduce the risk of resorting to negative coping mechanisms.</p>		
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support protection case management for women, men, boys, and girls who have suffered violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation, and offer targeted individual assistance to support access to services and participation in community activities. - The Protection Cluster to continue the roll-out of the harmonized protection monitoring tool and ensure data sharing agreements are in place to facilitate protection data collection and information sharing with the sector. - The Protection Cluster will work with actors to carry out joint assessments and vulnerability screenings to identify the most at-risk and plan response accordingly. - The Protection Cluster to publish and maintain online referral pathways for protection services to ensure they stay up-to-date, accessible, and easy to identify gaps. - The Protection Cluster in collaboration with the Health Sector, to advocate with donors on the gaps and needs of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services to increase the quality and availability of services. - § The Protection Cluster to work with other clusters to ensure protection mainstreaming 	

<p>Child Protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacities of child protection partners and social welfare workforce are strengthened to deliver equitable, quality prevention and response services through a strengthened child protection system. 	
<p>GBV</p>	<p>Enhance the well-being of survivors/vulnerable individuals through survivor-centred service provision and GBV risk mitigation efforts into humanitarian response efforts through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of programmes that provide peer support, mentoring/coaching, skill building, and empowerment targeting adolescents and adults. - Enhancement of systematic collection, collation, and analysis of age and gender-disaggregated data and information to strengthen incident management and generate evidence for more targeted programming and advocacy through the implementation of the GBV Information Management Systems (GBVIMS) - Strengthening, scaling up and/or establishment of programmes for survivors and women/girls formerly abducted/associated with armed groups & forces, and survivors of trafficking, to help them successfully (re)integrate into a healthy social environment. - Capacity building across all humanitarian sectors to increase awareness about services GBV and the ability to make safe referrals to appropriate assistance. - Engagement of relevant institutions/facilities (state services and humanitarian partners) in the provision of survivor-centred services. This also includes capacity building and engagement with security actors and other relevant stakeholders. <p>Strengthen and sustain the capacity of GBV actors to deliver quality GBV services, with a deliberate focus on capacity development of local actors (local organizations, government, and CBOs and Women's Organizations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved quality of service provision is a central focus of the response plan. The AoR will strengthen ongoing initiatives, such as the GBV case management capacity building initiative and support further development of specific skills such as responding to conflict-related sexual violence and caring for child survivors; complementing these efforts will be training sessions, mentoring, and coaching. - Organization of capacity training and activities for GBV and non-GBV actors: Training of trainers, Training of frontline responders, Training of partners who are working on GBV-related activities. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen Technical and institutional capacity building of local actors, CBOs, women, and government for improved delivery of specialized-quality GBV services. 	
HLP	<p>The HLP AoR will provide target groups with information on HLP rights and how to exercise them, including navigating administrative procedures. Following information dissemination, those beneficiaries who require legal advice tailored to their circumstances will be invited to counselling sessions. Beneficiaries will be assisted in exercising their HLP rights, such as securing tenancy agreements, increasing the security of land tenure, or resolving HLP-related disputes. Information sessions, counselling and legal assistance activities may involve home visits to reach beneficiaries who are otherwise inaccessible (including women, persons with disabilities, and older and sick persons) where access constraints exist.</p>	
<p>Strategic Objective 3: To strengthen the protection environment through the identification, monitoring and strengthening of risk reduction strategies of the affected population, legal and political systems as well as the capacity of local actors to respond to protection concerns.</p>		
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue the assessment and monitoring in return areas, in coordination with the government, to ensure respect of international principles and standards as well as local strategies (i.e., return strategy) and policies (national IDP policy/domestication of the Kampala convention); in addition, ensure the dissemination of information on areas of return and the return processes to enable informed decisions. - Develop guidance on implementing community-based protection mechanisms and structures in both rural and urban settings. - Prepare advocacy notes and other forms of advocacy to ensure the civilian character of the settlements. - Joint missions will be undertaken by the Cluster and AoR leads to field locations for support and capacity enhancement. - The Protection Cluster to continue the roll-out of the harmonized protection monitoring tool and ensure data sharing agreements are in place to facilitate protection data collection and information sharing with the sector. - The Protection Cluster to create joint advocacy based on evidence from protection monitoring, noting particularly effective targets should be local authorities, and develop a mechanism to monitor progress on key messages/advocacy. - The Protection Cluster to coordinate with the government to support the implementation of the National IDP policy. - Advocate to government and development actors for easy access to courts and civil documentation. 	

Child Protection	Leverage existing partnerships with Donors, the Government, and the Private sector for strategy advocacy and funding for child protection and foster the localization strategies.	
GBV	<p>Strengthen community resilience and systems/institutions that prevent and respond to GBV, including harmful practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of programmes aimed at addressing social norms and strengthening community-based actions/systems that promote accountability and resilience. This includes community engagement and capacity building programmes for community structures, dedicated programmes that address vulnerabilities to survival sex; early, forced, and child marriage; and intimate partner violence. - Increased access to safe socio-economic/livelihood/income-generation opportunities. Through its skill-building activities, the AoR will promote linkages to meaningful and protective livelihood activities and promote resilience. Specific focus will be on the re-integration and socio-economic needs of women and adolescents formerly associated with armed groups and children born in captivity/of the conflict. - Strengthening and sustaining capacity building, especially of local actors (local organizations, government, CBOs, and women organizations) for preparedness and to deliver quality GBV services. 	
HLP	HLP activities will support emergency responses, and durable solutions in return and displacement areas. AoR will support the processing of HLP documentation i.e., certificates of occupancy for returnees, and IDPs with land allocation to secure their land title and prevent future disputes on those lands.	