

Protection Response to Civil Documentation and Birth Registration needs in NWSW Cameroon (Jan – Sept 2024)



64, 663 individuals reached by awareness raising sessions on civil documentation (including birth registration)



13,120 children received birth certificates.



57% of **assessed households** identified the lack of civil documentation as their key protection concern (MSNA 2024)

Overview

In Cameroon, nationality is granted primarily under the principle of *jus sanguinis*, i.e. by birth in Cameroon or abroad to parents with Cameroonian nationality, and the birth certificate is the first civil documentation which establishes an individual's legal existence. It is a key document for accessing all other citizenship documents such as the national identity card and the electoral card. A birth certificate is required to enrol children in school, partake in public examinations and move between primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels.

The national identity card affords holders the possibility of enjoying their civil, political, economic, and socio-cultural rights. It enhances freedom of movement, travel privileges and voting rights.

Without civil documentation, vulnerable and forcibly displaced populations in the NWSW regions are unable to enjoy their rights under national and international law, and remain susceptible to movement restrictions, exploitation, and a precarious protection environment.

For this reason, the Protection Cluster NWSW and its AoRs have prioritised the facilitation of the civil documentation process for conflict-affected people in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions, supporting the issuance of birth certificates to crisis-affected children and strengthening the process of the issuance of civil documentation to displaced and other crises-affected persons.

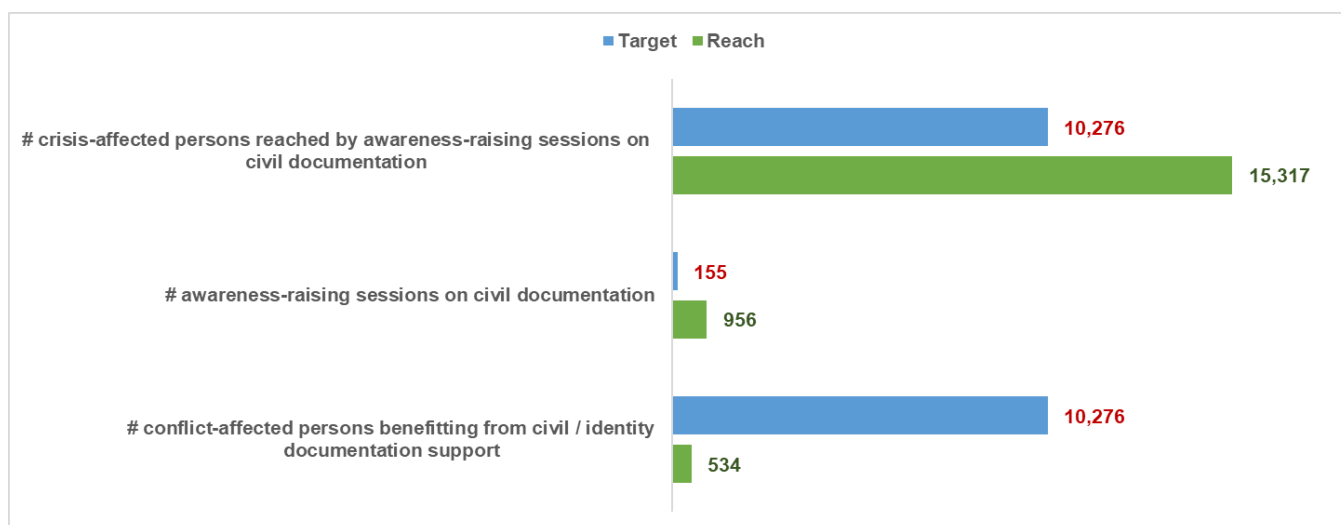
Achievements

Between January – September 2024, protection actors recorded the following achievements:

- Provide support to issue birth certificates to humanitarian crisis-affected children.**



2. Strengthen the process of issuance of civil documentation to displaced and crisis-affected persons.



Key Challenges

Protection actors continue to face major challenges supporting the crisis-affected population to gain civil documentation. These are:

- **Insecurity:** Some locations in the NWSW regions remain inaccessible due to the presence of NSAGs and movement restrictions, making it difficult for humanitarian actors to reach affected populations in these areas. In addition to this, civilians face reprisals from both NSAGs for having national identity cards, and State Security Forces (SSF) for not having the cards respectively, putting them in a very precarious position, and undecided on whether to apply for the national identity card. Some civil registration centres have also been forced to relocate as a result of the on-going insecurity.
- **Socio-political:** humanitarian actors carrying out civil documentation activities have been accused by NSAGs of supporting the Government of Cameroon in registering the affected population for the upcoming elections which they oppose. There have been a few reported cases of humanitarian actors being abducted by NSAGs during civil documentation activities.
- **Duplicity of efforts:** there is need for better coordination among civil documentation actors. Several actors begin implementing activities without informing the cluster, often leading to duplication of efforts and documents. The protection cluster, together with BUNEC, has begun mapping civil documentation actors in both regions to reduce this, but there are local organizations which operate outside of the humanitarian coordination mechanism, and it might be difficult to track these.
- **Administrative bottlenecks:** the civil documentation process can be time-consuming in certain locations, leading to impatience from the affected populations, and causing some of them to travel to other locations to re-initiate the process, often leading to duplication of efforts by humanitarian actors and the issuance of multiple documents. In addition to this, one of the requirements for the issuance of the national identify card is the birth certificate, which several of the crisis-affected adults lack, making it difficult for them to apply for the cards.
- **Availability of Birth Registration Services:** In the NWSW regions, the coverage of civil registration services remains insufficient. While 100% of the main civil registration offices are still operational, only 33% of the secondary civil registration offices are functional. The availability of inputs such as birth registers remains low to meet the demand.

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