



CAMEROON

Protection Analysis Update

Update on Protection Risks Caused by Protracted Armed Conflicts,
and Climatic Hazards

March 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The protection environment remained volatile, unstable and hostile to the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedom due to the ongoing conflict affecting populations across Far North, Northwest and Southwest of Cameroon. The impact of conflict and violations to human rights and international humanitarian law has remained unchanged over the course of the last two years, with no substantial improvements in the protection of civilians, safety and security, or access to services.

In the latest period, conditions have worsened. Human rights violations persist, exacerbated by repeated attacks, abductions, unlawful arrests and arbitrary detentions, theft and the deliberate destruction of personal property. Restrictions on freedom of movement and frequent lockdowns disrupt daily life and severely impact socio-economic activities. Both private and public property and infrastructure suffer significant damage, exacerbating issues such as educational disparities for children, with many schools remaining unsafe and lacking basic facilities. Climate change impacts further exacerbate the effects on population, with severe weather events causing further displacement. The most vulnerable population, including children, face heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation.

Populations faced multiple displacements further exposing them to human rights violations, exploitation and abuse. In the Far North region, women and girls are disproportionately affected by harmful cultural practices and deep-rooted biases, leading to an alarming increase in gender-based violence (GBV), particularly domestic and intimate partner violence. Men and boys, on the other hand, are subjected to violations against the physical integrity, including unlawful arrests and arbitrary detentions, especially in the Northwest and Southwest regions.ⁱ

The protection risks requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

1. **Gender-based violence**
2. **Unlawful impediments or restrictions to freedom of movement, siege and forced displacement**
3. **Child and family separation**
4. **Torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment**
5. **Abduction, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention**

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

- Initiate a dialogue on the responsibility of duty bearers and all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and Refugee Law (RL), emphasizing the urgent need to stop grave violations, particularly those impacting the most vulnerable populations, especially children.ⁱⁱ
- Advocate for the release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups and armed forces by all parties to the conflict and support their reintegration into their communities. Support the implementation of Protocols.
- Advocate with central government to train state security forces on the responsibility to protect civilians and take mitigating measures for the protection of civilians and reduce civilian casualties.

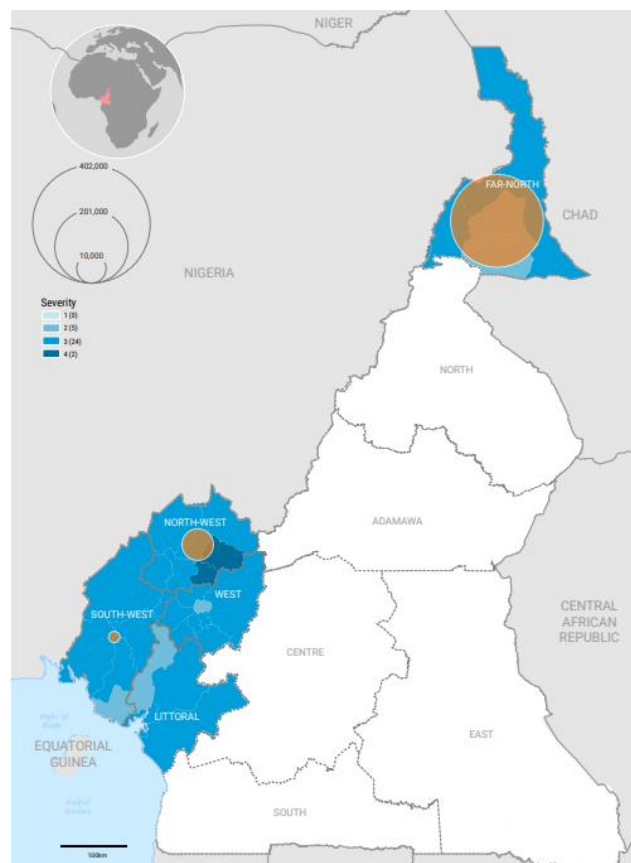


Figure 1 - HNRP 2025 Protection Severity

CONTEXT

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES (NWSW)

1,371

IDPs

1.036M

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (NWSW)

4,456

PEOPLE IN NEED

3.4M

Cameroon continues to face the devastating effects of three ongoing and protracted humanitarian crises:

- **The Lake Chad Basin (LCB) crisis in the Far North (FN) Region**, which began in 2013 due to insurgencies by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), now compounded by inter-communal clashes in neighboring Nigeria.
- **The influx of refugees into the East (E) Region from the Central African Republic (CAR)** due to the ongoing conflict since 2013.
- **The Anglophone Crisis in the Northwest (NW) and Southwest (SW) Regions**, which escalated into a violent separatist movement in 2017, pitting Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) against State Security Forces (SSFs).

The displacement caused by these conflicts has led to widespread family separations, a surge in the number of unaccompanied and separated children, child labor, and the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups. In addition, sexual exploitation, child marriage and disruption to education have become significant concerns. In the Far North region, the criminal activities of various armed and unidentified groups, combined with climatic hazards such as floods have resulted in loss of life, destruction of properties, and degradation of natural resources. Climate changes also caused mudslides in the Southwest and Centre Regions with devastating impacts on populations. These challenges continue to foster an environment of insecurity, forcing affected populations, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, and host communities into further displacement, heightening their vulnerability to protection risks.

The security situation in the North-West (NW) and South-West (SW) regions remains tense and unpredictable, leading to an unstable protection environment, marked by widespread human rights violations against civilians. Criminal activity has escalated with increasing reports of theft and abductions for ransom. The trend of lockdowns which persisted from previous years, continues to disrupt the lives of the civilian population and their ability to access services such as health, education, and livelihood opportunities. Non-compliance with these lockdowns often lead to swift reprisals from NSAGs, including summary executions and dismemberment. According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) 1,940 security events resulted in 1,371 fatalities in the NWSW regions between January and December 2024, compared to 1,921 security events and 1,450 fatalities during the same period in 2023. Sadly, Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the on-going conflict, suffering several rights violations perpetrated by both NSAGs and state security forces. ⁱⁱⁱ

Access to justice for victims of arbitrary arrests remains severely limited, primarily due to the small number of organizations providing legal services, and people's reluctance to seek legal assistance. This is often driven by a lack of financial resources and limited knowledge of their right to access justice or the availability of such specialized services. ^{iv}

Men and boys remain disproportionately affected by human rights violations, constituting nearly 75% of the victims. Protection actors have reported that engaging them in humanitarian activities is particularly challenging, which results in a lower likelihood of them seeking protection assistance. In contrast, women are more likely to attend the sensitization and awareness-raising sessions, which increases their awareness of where to seek support when needed.

COLLAPSING PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The protection environment in the NW&SW and Far North regions remained tense and unpredictable, characterized by an increase in criminality, with incursions by non-State armed groups (NSAGs) into urban areas like downtown Bamenda, attacks on State Security Forces (SSF) positions, threats to civilians, and an increase in the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by NSAGs. By the end of December 2024, 19,064 individual incidents were recorded across all three regions with the most violations taking place in the Far North. The overall protection environment did not improve at the beginning of 2025 and was

worsened by the freeze on humanitarian funding. In the NW&SW, in the first Quarter 2025, (Q1), some 444 human rights violations were recorded in January of which 293 took place in February alone. Abductions for ransom remained a key protection risk with 103 victims during the same period. This presents a noticeable **increase of 18% compared to the** same period in 2024. Illegal taxation continues unabated and is worsened by the splintering of NSAG and squabbling for leadership, following the killing of some commanders by State Security Forces. In the rapidly changing dynamics, protection of civilians remain tenuous as civilians are often caught in between the warring parties. There are no clear indications that the security and protection of the environment will change drastically in 2025. In fact, this being an election year in Cameroon, slated for October, protection actors are concerned that many violations committed will go unreported. Protection programming in the NWSW is severely limited due to actors' ability to deploy staff to carry out protection monitoring to identify, and report on incidents.

Over the course of the past few years, the crisis in the NW&SW region intensified with the killing of several NSAG leaders and/or the capture by the SSF, however, this did not de-escalate nor decrease the conflict, but rather created leadership vacuums and the splintering of NSAG factions, further complicating humanitarian and access negotiations. Another disturbing trend witnessed over the past year was the significant spike in the use of IEDs, attacks on SSF positions and calls for lockdowns by NSAGs. This was presumably a tactic deployed by NSAG, either to pressure the government into releasing their captured comrades, an to attack the credibility of the central government and thirdly to question the government commitment to resolving the anglophone crisis.

Other protection risks assessed during the period under review was the negative impact the protracted crisis is having on the youth and adolescent children. Drug abuse and addiction was found to be rife amongst young men between the ages of 18 to 25. This age group remains highly vulnerable as they are not targeted for humanitarian assistance, many of them were found to be mostly out of school and face challenges accessing livelihood opportunities. This gap exposes these young demographics as soft targets for harassment by both SSF and NSAGs. The NSAGs continuously harass the youth with the intent to forcibly recruit them as fighters. They are routinely suspected (often without proof) of carrying out criminal activities within communities, thus placing them in a very precarious position. Generally, protection monitoring reports showed that the victims of human rights violations do not seek legal assistance or recourse committed against them by either party to the conflict. This is ostensibly due to the fear of reprisals and retaliation against family members. In addition, victims of human rights violations also decried the prohibitive cost of legal services, seen as being too high for indigents. It is a protection concern that the area of legal aid and assistance is struggling because of too few actors working in this domain. There is overall disillusionment in accessing legal aid and assistance is wanting for victims of violations^v

Given all the above factors, the protracted crisis continues to take its toll on the mental health of the affected population, children remain the most affected, having to face the trauma of family separation and suffering acute mental health and psychosocial distress. Overall, critical services are inadequate to cover all the mental health and psychosocial needs, and MHPSS practitioners are struggling to manage huge caseload of civilians with psychosocial distress.^{vi}

The unfavorable protection environment has enabled the persistent extortion and exploitation of civilian populations in the NW&SW regions. This has been witnessed by the high number of human rights abuses in Fako division in the SW, which is attributed to the strong military presence to counter the NSAG activities; Fako is also the division that has the highest concentration humanitarian actors, which makes monitoring and reporting of violations much easier than in other divisions. In the month of September 2024, there was a heavy buildup of military presence in the Southwest region because of accusations by political leaders of complacency on the part of state security forces, in comparison with military operations of SSF counterparts in the NW region. This led to many operations by the SSF and upsurge in confrontations in SW towards the end of the year. Access to justice for victims of arbitrary arrests is limited due to the absence of organizations providing legal services, and the reluctance of civilian population to engage lawyers due to reasons already cited above.^{vii}

Similar trends were also reported in the Far North region, where the situation deteriorated further due insecurity resulting in 14,635 individual incidents affecting 7,269 men; 5,629 women, 930 girls and 627 boys) reported between January to December 2024. In the 1st quarter (Q1) of 2025, there was a sharp increase in human rights violations, with 1,367 incidents reported. Cases of kidnapping for ransom perpetrated by the non-state armed groups, (NSAG) with reports of those kidnapped, forcible recruitment continue. Boys and men remain particularly vulnerable as they are perceived to be financially able to pay ransom, given that they are petty traders and own animals, cattle, goats, sheep. These abductions are mostly carried out to raise

money to fund the criminal activities of the NSAGs. In addition, ongoing attacks and theft of livestock are other modus operandi employed by the NSAG to get funds to carry on activities. The three departments of Mayo Tsanaga, Mayo Sava and Logori et Chari, remain the hotspots where civilians face arbitrary “search and cordon” conducted by the mixed multinational and state forces. These searches often result in reports of cases of torture, physical and psychological trauma whilst in detention. Civilians face heightened protection risks under these conditions, which unfortunately adversely targets mostly young boys and adult men, (67% of the victims were men and boy), as they suffer multiple physical and threats to life and physical integrity, restriction of movement etc. It was also observed in Q1 2025, that 67 children were victims of violations reported from the three departments. This is probably because many children are further exposed to protection risks because of the destruction of traditional protection safety nets in these communities. The main protection risks in this region remain violations against property, which includes the willful destruction and theft of property at 56%; threats to life and physical integrity, 36%; and gender-based violence, GBV. Many of the displaced persons confirmed during various assessments, Focus Group Discussions, (FGD); Return Intention Surveys, (RIS) that they remain apprehensive and suffer psychological trauma from the on-going insecurity. Additionally, incidents of extortion, the imposition of illegal tax, attacks on schools, gender-based violence, and family separation remain prevalent across all three regions. In the Far North region alone, more than 300 civilians were killed in 2024 from 1,959 attacks perpetrated by the NSAG. That is to say that at least 13% of these attacks are attributed to the NSAG. Similar protection trends have spilled over to the first three months of 2025 as shown by the sharp increase in violations reported so far. The situation seems to be deteriorating but protection monitoring activities, outreach and reporting was low due to the suspension of activities by the main protection actors operating in the region. ^{viii}

Over the past couple of years, civilian casualties rose with intensification of military operations by the State Security Forces (SSF) against the non-state armed groups (NSAGs). As already explained above, predatory acts were particularly frequent in the Far North region, with property and crops stolen and livelihood destroyed by NSAGs to extract and appropriate resources for themselves. Clashes over land and natural resources continue to escalate between and within communities, often along ethnic and religious lines. Civilians, particularly fishermen working on Lake Chad, are often abducted, and released only after hefty ransoms are paid. In the department of Logone et Chari, protection monitors reported that traditional practices that hinder women’s right to property are still widespread, further accentuated by continuing attacks by NSAG. The typology of the violations registered in Q1 of 2025 remain the same to those reported in 2024: (i) violations against property, 753 incidents (55.1%); (ii) violation of the right to life and physical integrity, 482 victims (35.3%); (iii) gender-based violence, 84 victims, (6.1%). Already vulnerable displaced populations in Mayo Sava faced other catastrophic calamities during Q1 of 2025 with frequent fire outbreaks, some 4,000 individuals lost their shelters/NFI, household goods, food stocks in Mayo Sava and Mayo Tsanaga. These wildfires resulted at least 3 civilian deaths, including two (2) children and one (1) woman lost in the conflagration. The Protection actors are working with the Shelter/NFI Sector and OCHA to see how best to put in place mitigation measures to contain these frequent fire outbreaks and to save lives. Initial assessments show that there are many contributory factors for these frequent fires which must be addressed, such as overcrowding, lack of proper planning of IDP sites, children left with no supervision/negligence, poorly constructed shelters and no camp coordination and camp management, CCCM result in these tragic events.

The lack of civil documentation remains one of the main protection concerns in the Far North. According to several protection assessments conducted by the Protection Sector, 65% of the population is without civil documentation. The lack of civil and legal documentation is a long-term development issue that must be addressed by the government. The protection sector and cluster in the NW&SW is actively engaged with Gouvernement au Bureau National de l'Etat Civil (BUNEC) is the government office responsible for the issuance national identity cards. In all three regions and at the national level, a civil documentation platform exists to ensure proper coordination with government authorities on the processes and issuance of civil documentation. This is a problem throughout the country which exposes civilians, and not only the displaced persons to serious protection risks, may result in limited/denial of access services, restriction on the freedom of movement, arbitrary arrest and detention, loss of property, or inability to claim their right to property upon return.

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CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

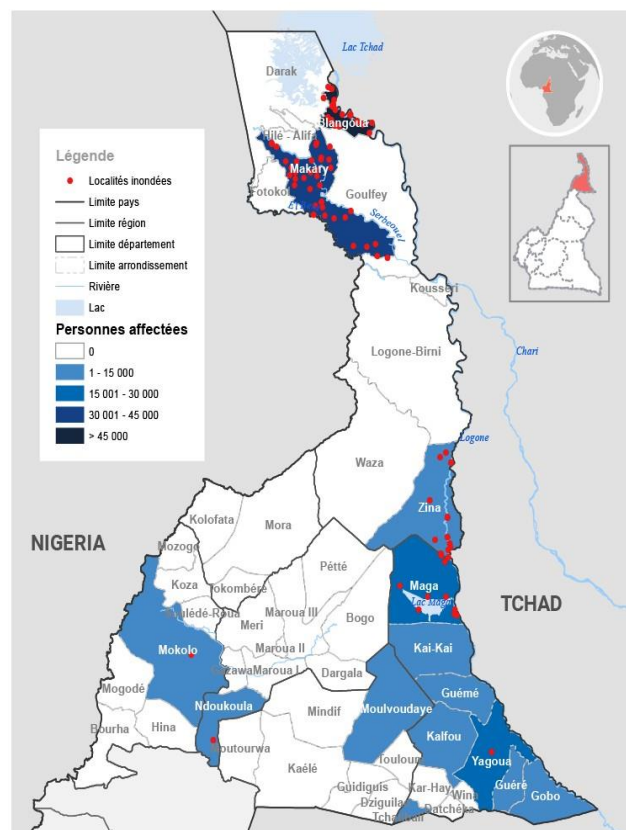
Between June and October 2024, the Far North region was ravaged by the most devastating floods in over 20 years which placed approximately 448,164 persons affected. Of this number, some 214,000 faced serious protection risks. in the 5 departments of (Logone et Chari, Mayo-Danay, Diamare, Mayo-Tsanaga and Mayo-Kani). More than 56,084 houses were destroyed/damaged, 85,253 hectares of cultivable land flooded, and 5,5100 animals lost. The most affected sectors included shelter, food security, health, education. Some 263 schools were destroyed. 38 deaths people, including 4 children who drowned because of the heavy rains in the town of Maroua^x.

The unprecedented floods witnessed in 2024 exacerbated serious protection risks or created new ones, resulting in the loss of live, extensive destruction of shelters, and heightened vulnerability associated with multiple displacement scenarios. Many families were separated, with destruction of household property, and the loss of civil documentation. Persons living with specific needs faced a particularly harrowing period as the delivery of essential lifesaving services was disrupted. The persons living with disabilities, the elderly, unaccompanied or separated minors/out of school children faced monumental challenges accessing health services, suffered from food shortages and spike in cases of malnutrition.

The populations' vulnerabilities also increased due to the challenging environmental conditions in all three regions and in other parts of the country with heavy rains, and subsequent flooding. Many roads were rendered inaccessible, thus hampering access to and from their farms. As a result, farmers struggled to access markets and were unable to sell their produce, adding to the economic strain on an already struggling population. The widespread flooding and impassable roads made movements extremely difficult, further disrupting livelihoods and hindering efforts to build resilience for the hundreds of thousands displaced by the protracted crises. Women and children are disproportionately affected by climate change and severe weather events, which disrupts their lives, as schools become inaccessible. In response to these drastic changes, families must adapt their routines to cope with challenges like food shortage, potable water and limited access to healthcare and education.^{xi}

INTER-COMMUNAL CLASHES IN FAR NORTH

The situation in the Far North region was characterized by inter-communal clashes, over land and natural resources use between and within communities, causing conflict along ethnic, professional, and religious lines. Insecurity has forced many people to abandon their homes and possessions, with the security crisis in the Far North region having a devastating impact on Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) ownership. A significant number of IDPs and returnees are rendered homeless, often



Map of flooded localities in the Far North region | source: Local authorities, CRC

living in displacement camps or in spontaneous settlements where living conditions are extremely precarious. IDPs face significant challenges in securing adequate shelter, especially in areas where security is not guaranteed. These sites are often overcrowded and lack basic resources such as clean drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare services. Many displaced people also remain at risk of forced eviction as they lack legally binding tenancy or lease agreement. As a result, they are at increased risk of exploitation, abusive tenancy agreements, extortion, and the threat of secondary/multiple displacements^{xii}. Access constraints hampered protection actors' efforts to reach persons trapped behind the conflict zones, mostly in frontier between Nigeria and Cameroon. This situation is likely to continue in 2025.

In the Far North, from June 2024 the region witnessed massive population movements, which peaked in July with new arrivals of some 2,803 Chadian nationals in the village of Mourla, commune of Vélé and Kaikai, in the department of Mayo Danay. The movement was triggered by an inter-community conflict between 02 tribes in Chad forcing the mass exodus into Cameroon. These frequent population movements stretch the already overburdened systems and resources and may lead to hostility between the host community, new arrivals and refugees. The main protection risks relate to the appalling living conditions the new arrivals found themselves in, and they were forced to occupy public schools in Vélé-Guémé commune. This occupation of schools interferes with access to education and denies children access to facilities occupied by the Chadians and this could lead to friction and escalation of hostilities. In addition, there are concerns with the high number of unregistered refugees in Blangoua, in department of Logori et Chari. Unfortunately, by the end of 2024, many of these refugees were still languishing in limbo with no long-term solutions found for them. The pendular movement of populations along the border with Chad and Nigeria is a phenomenon that is likely to continue as populations seek safety, services and to build livelihoods. Social committees have been established in the Far North to support solutions such as local integration, returns and repatriation and the protection sector in Far North is leading these efforts with government authorities and 11 other organizations^{xiii}.

PROTECTION RISKS

RISK 1 Gender-based violence

Gender Based violence remains widespread in Cameroon and the main human rights violation affecting women and girls. The barriers to access services poses significant threat to survivors. In 2024, 77 cases of feminicides were reported in Cameroon. The situation is exacerbated in crisis affected zones.

In the Far North, the ongoing insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin continues to expose women and girls to increased risks of GBV, making their safety a significant and persistent concern. According to voices from Cameroon, The most reported forms of GBV include intimate partner violence (IPV) manifesting mostly as sexual, physical and emotional violence from current and former partners. Sexual violence manifested in various forms such as rape, sexual assaults and harassment. Child forced and early marriage or union persists across the three conflict zones but more pervasive in the Far North region.

In Northwest and Southwest, IPV, emotional abuse, denial of resources/opportunities, and physical and sexual assault are prominent forms of GBV reported by women and girls – according to Voices. According to GBV IMSs the most reported incidents include IPV (41%) and sexual violence (31%). Many women and girls faced cultural barriers which effectively denied them access to resources, services and opportunities such as limited access to money, education, limited independence and women's inability to access small scale trade. Many women also faced the trauma of emotional distress underscoring the need for mental health and psychosocial support services. ^{xiv}

Traditional discriminatory practices further exacerbate the situation, particularly regarding women's rights to property in the NW region. Widows, especially those without marriage certificates, are particularly vulnerable, often being left homeless with their children. These harmful practices are usually enforced by extended family members, community leaders, and traditional authorities, reflecting deep-rooted power imbalances and unequal gender dynamics. The gaps remain severe and many women and girls at risk of gender-based violence were denied access to critical services. The GBV actors reported that by the December 2024, some 58.240 GBV survivors benefited from at least one form of GBV lifesaving services.

RISK 2 Unlawful impediments or restrictions to freedom of movement, siege and forced displacement

During the course of the year, several ad-hoc lockdowns were imposed on the civilian population in the NWSW regions. At least some 10 lockdowns were declared in the NW&SW around national holidays, Youth Day Celebrations, 11 February: 20 May National Day of Unity, school resumption in September and October 1st to 5th. Many arrests are carried out during these periods ^{xv}. In April, multiple lockdowns were declared, with civilians in Mezzam Division, NW region observing "Ghost Town" on every Thursday throughout the month. On May 16, different NSAGs called for lockdown to disrupt the celebration of the 20 May National Day. While some groups called for lockdowns from May 19 - 20, others extended their calls from May 17 – 20. Civilians in the NWSW regions decided to observe all four days to ensure their personal safety and security. Concerns on retaliation against ordinary people who participated in the National Day celebrations were reported and many were targeted for assault and abductions by NSAGs.

The protection environment continued to degenerate in August, when eight different NSAGs declared various lockdown periods, aiming to draw the attention of the UN General Assembly scheduled in September 2024 while also disrupting school resumption in the NWSW regions. These lockdowns were declared for several periods: from 2 to 9 September 2024, from 9 to 16 September 2024 and from 9 to 23 September 2024, with alternate school resumption dates announced by NSAG on 17 September, 24 September, 2 October 2024. Many children could therefore not attend schools, as parents could want to expose their children to harm.

The situation in the North-West and South-West regions remains unpredictable and volatile at the beginning of 2025. Already, reports have been received of increased confrontation, between the NSAG and government defense and security forces, causing violence, human rights violations and widespread insecurity. Other aggravating factors fueling the conflict is the increased militarization of security operations, extortion and impositions of illegal tax at illegal check points. These factors intensify insecurity and exacerbate the psychological trauma and triggers constant displacement of populations, with glaring

humanitarian impact. Protection monitors report that displaced households confirm that conflict is the main cause of their displacement. There is a high concentration of IDPs being found in urban areas in the divisions of Mezam, Meme in the NW and Fako in the SW, the hotspots. Vulnerabilities are greater among displaced populations; especially children who face multiple risks (exploitation, limited access to essential services, heightened risk to gender-based violence) which further undermine the protection of these child.

It is of concern to reiterate that similar trends have spilled over to 2025 with protection actors observing that across the NW&SW regions, civilians continue to face reprisals from both parties to the conflict, NSAGs and SSFs for failing to respect or adhere to the lockdowns. In Mezam division, in NW, NSAGs ambushed and killed three civilians (one male, two females) on a motorbike for violating the lockdown. In Ndiang division, the Government Defence and Security Forces, GDSF sealed several shops in Mundemba, accusing the traders of respecting NSAG-imposed lockdowns. Three businessmen were arrested for resisting the sealing of their shops. There are many such incidents reported in the monthly protection monitoring reports by all the key protection actors.

RISK 3 Child and Family separation

The protracted situation in the three regions and the continuing population movements and displacement has had devastating effects on the children. Many children have been separated from their parents and families and are exposed to a myriad of protection risks due to the volatile security situation which has disrupted traditional social protection mechanisms. The child protection needs assessment carried out in 2024 revealed that family separation and unaccompanied and separated children are prevalent in all 3 regions of the Far North, Northwest and Southwest.

The assessment showed that in addition to family separation, children in the Far North are at risk of abduction, recruitment and use by NSAGs, forced marriage, sexual violence, and exploitation. The conflict has displaced many families, leaving children without access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. It was reported in November and December by the CP AoR that grave violations against children rose drastically to 50%, with reports of murder, mutilations, abduction and attacks on schools.

Key findings in the Northwest region include high prevalence of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), widespread child labor, and significant recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups. In the Southwest boys and girls are additionally exposed to environmental hazards, civil disobedience, sexual abuse and domestic violence, engagement in criminal activities, workplace accidents, harsh corporal punishment, and violence from armed groups.^{xvi}

RISK 4 Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings

Armed attacks and fear of insecurity to the search for social infrastructure such as schools and housing are direct causes of population movements, including pendular movements across both regions. Most of the infrastructure in rural areas – schools, hospitals, markets and homes have been deliberately destroyed by NSAGs (and reportedly SSFs), and the civilian population has been forced to move to urban areas in search of these amenities. These movement causes population increases in urban areas, creating a strain on social infrastructure, and leading to strained relations in some areas. This sudden increase in population is driving up food prices and rent, for example the available housing is not sufficient to meet needs.

Numerous reports of targeted attacks (fear of) were recorded in NW&SW regions between October and December, 2024, as captured by The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, (ACLED) project, which reported a total of 455 (256 in NW and 190 in SW) security incidents which resulted in civilian casualties, (105 in NW and 255 in SW). Population movements were reported with IDP displacements of 1,354 individuals, (274) HH in Boyo, Donga Mantung, Kumbo, Menchum and Mezam divisions in the North-West region - while 107 individuals returned to Akwaya subdivision of Manyu Division from Obudu, Cross Rivers State, Nigeria^{xvii}. Historic conflict between farmers and herders and along the Cameroon-Nigeria border continue to play out, with frequent skirmishes over land in the first two months of 2025. On 3rd January, Fulani herdsmen from Nigeria attacked a military base in Akwayi and in the ensuing violence, 10 civilians lost their lives and 560 households were displaced. These confrontations will most likely continue in 2025.

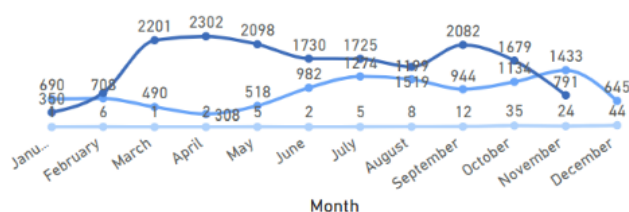
The trend of insecurity fueling fear for civilian populations, spilled over to January and February 2025, with a marked increase in armed confrontation between NSAG and SSF. Many acts of criminality and terrorism continue to be reported in the NW&SW.

Due to increased SSF activities in the rural areas, NSAG operatives have moved into urban locations in Mezam and Fako and increased their attacks against the populations and SSF. It is of grave concern that IED are being used in attacks in areas with large populations. This re-emergence of IEDs remains a serious protection risk likely to cause more civilian casualties.

In the Far North, the situation also worsened in 2024 considerably, in the district of Guidiguis, department of Mayo-Kani, where a significant increase in IEDs by non-state armed groups was reported. At least 10 IEDs were defused by the SDF and 5 detonated, resulting in the death of 5 civilians and injuring others 7. The resurgence of IEDs, poses grave risks to children and continues to claim civilian casualties in Far North.

Individual Incident by Month

Year ● 2022 ● 2023 ● 2024



Community Incident by Month

Year ● 2022 ● 2023 ● 2024



Frequent attacks on civilian population and sites continued as well throughout the year. In the hotspot department of Logon et Chari, village of Tikar, in the district of Hile-Alifa, where a health center was looted and set on fire by armed fighters. Civilian casualties rose with intensification of military operations by the State Security Forces (SSF) against the unidentified armed groups NSAGs. Predatory acts were particularly frequent, with theft of property and crops, the abduction of minors for recruitment by unidentified armed groups. In addition, livelihoods were destroyed by NSAGs groups seeking to secure provisions for themselves. Clashes over land and natural resources use between and within communities, with conflict appearing along ethnic and religious lines. Civilians Fishermen plying their trade on Lake Chad were often abducted and only released from captivity after ransom was paid. ^{xviii} Repeated attacks in various villages in Mayo-Moskota department led to 9 huts burned down, 1 civilian casualty, 3 young girls kidnapped, and 6 civilians were wounded by armed bandits. On 25th October, two children aged 12 and 15 were abducted by armed men in Djibirille in Mayo Tsanaga department^{xix}. Protection monitors report that these children were most likely targeted for trafficking and forceful recruitment by the armed groups. The departments Mayo Sava, Mayo Tsanaga neighboring Nigeria remains insecure due to frequent attacks by the various armed groups affiliated to the ISWAP and JAS factions still active in Northeast Nigeria. Protection of civilians remains a priority for protection sector and AoRs. The Sector updates the HCT on the protection trends, and centrality of protection is standing agenda item at the monthly meeting. Advocacies continue with local authorities and state security and defense forces. Much more joint effort and political is urgently needed, now more than ever as we embark on the transition.

The same scenario of attacks and clashes frequently related to extortion and exploitation of the civilian populations across NW&SW regions persists. In one example, at the beginning of February 2024, a notorious NSAG leader reportedly attempted to extort money from some communities by requesting villages around Upper-bayang sub-division in Manyu division of the SW region. The NSAG leader demanded each community to pay him (ransom/illegal tax) 5,000,000 million FCFA before 18/02/2024 or he would start executing civilians in villagers. These threats forced the population of Ayukaba, and other surrounding villages in Upper Bayang sub-division in Manyu division to flee into the bushes/forest, spent the night hidden, too fearful to return to their homes. The populations later fled to Mamfe town and Widikum in the North-west. It was reported that the NSAGs then retaliated by systematically burning down houses and other properties the vacated villages. For this reason, populations find it hard to settle down and build sustainable livelihoods as they are forced to flee constantly seeking security and protection. There are no indications that the situation will improve for the better in 2025, it could worsen with the suspension of humanitarian activities and protection monitoring where many actors will not be able to access hard to reach areas. The termination of funding for humanitarian assistance to the persons in need in the crisis affected regions, will have long lasting catastrophic repercussions as other groups move in to fill the gap with the reduction in the humanitarian footprint. Protection of civilians will be sacrificed at the altar of political and military gain.

As witnessed in previous years, attacks against education increased in the months leading up to the resumption of the new academic year in September. In the last week of August, 2024, contending NSAG factions called for different lockdowns

between the 2nd and 30th of September 2024 aimed at disrupting the resumption of schools in the NWSW regions. Across the two regions, teachers and school children were attacked and abducted by NSAGs in a bid to enforce the lockdowns. In one incident in Nkambe, both school children on their way to school and traders on their way to the market were accused by NSAGs of promoting government activities and had their personal items – money, phones and school items extorted by the NSAGs.

RISK 5**Abduction, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention**

In the last quarter of 2024, reports of abductions for ransom and extortion rose, with NSAGs increasingly using these tactics to fund their activities, particularly in anticipation of the end of year festivities. However, the situation deteriorated further from mid-year. Seven incidents of arbitrary arrests and detentions, affecting 303 victims were recorded in July alone, as SSFs increasingly carried out “cordon and search” operations in the regions to flush out NSAGs. The NSAGs also on the other hand, increased illegal checkpoints which were used to extort money, confiscate property, abduction for ransom etc.

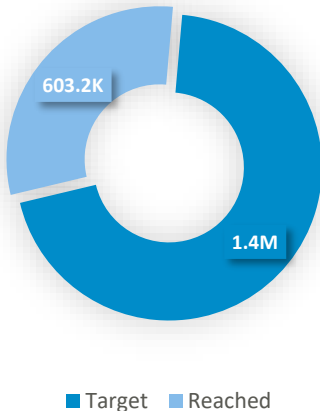
In the NW&SW, abductions are often motivated by suspicion of affiliation with SSFs. Civilians in these conflict zones are often caught in between the warring factions and are accused of supporting one or the other party. In August 2024, 15 commercial motorcycle riders were abducted by NSAGs from their homes in Mundemba, for allegedly collaborating with the State Security Forces. In addition, the number of individuals abducted rose to 288 Q4 as compared to 135 in Q3^{xx}. Men and boys are particularly targeted due to their ownership of cocoa farms and businesses, they are also perceived more likely to afford ransom demands. This is particularly prevalent in Menchum and Manyu Divisions along the Cameroon – Nigeria border – which are the major trade route.

In addition to the foregoing, the State Security Forces (SSF) largely focused their “cordon and search” operations in the SW region to deter NSAG attacks in this region. Numerous reports have emerged of civilians being unlawfully arrested and arbitrarily detained during such operations. Many detainees have recounted experiences of torture and mental abuse during their detention. However, many of these cases are not reported or resolved due to widespread fears of reprisals from the parties to conflict and the risk of retaliation against their families. This situation is made worse by the lack of accessible legal aid in the NW&SW regions. Protection monitoring quarterly updates for October - December 2024, NW&SW indicated that there were 1,109 victims of multiple human rights violations, including torture and inhumane treatment.

In September, a significant increase in protection and security incidents was similarly reported. This could be attributed to the increase in NSAG presence in almost all communities in the NW&SW in a bid to enforce the lockdown and an increase in SSF activities to curb NSAG activities. 549 human rights violations were recorded in September (in comparison to 311 in August) in the NW&SW regions. The top three reported violations remain threats to Life and personal security (149 Victims), Arbitrary arrests and detentions (91 victims), and Torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment (53 Victims). Men and boys unfortunately remain the most affected. ^{xxi}

RESPONSE

PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION



In 2024, the protection response in Cameroon declined compared to previous years due to reduced funding, diminished partner presence, and ongoing access constraints, all within an increasingly volatile environment that severely disrupted civilian protection.

Despite these challenges, coordination structures remained active. The Protection Cluster convenes monthly in both the North-West/South-West (NWSW) and Far North, with GBV and Child Protection AoRs operational at national and sub-national levels. Dedicated cluster coordinators are in place to support regional and national coordination.

Protection remains a standing item in the monthly Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) meetings. Key actors—UNHCR, INTERSOS, DRC, and IRC—continue to conduct regular protection monitoring.

To strengthen data consistency, efforts are underway to harmonize tools through the launch of Project 21. The Protection Monitoring Task Force, reinstated in September 2023 and co-led by DRC, is central to this initiative. An MoU signed in April 2024 between DRC and Respect Cameroon reinforced co-coordination arrangements at the national level. The 2024–2026 Protection Strategy was finalized, aligning with the Centrality of Protection approach endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in May 2023. The Protection Sector continues to report to the HCT on its implementation. Referral pathways have been established by regional clusters, though they require biannual updates to ensure effectiveness.

CRITICAL GAPS IN FUNDING AND POPULATION REACHED

Critical gaps in the protection response persist across Cameroon, particularly in legal aid, mental health support, and child protection services. Access to justice remains extremely limited, with victims of unlawful arrest, detention, and torture often unable or unwilling to seek redress due to fear of reprisals and lack of services.

The shortage of trained child protection staff and GBV service providers has left many survivors without adequate support, while lockdowns and displacement continue to separate families and expose children to recruitment and abuse. Coordination efforts require scaling up to ensure the consistent delivery of protection services across conflict-affected regions.

The sector and AoRs struggled with funding gaps in 2024. The financial requirement for HRP 2025 to respond to targeted 1.4 m was \$49 m, the sector only received \$16 m, or 32%. Despite this shortfall, protection actors reached almost half the targeted number with affected critical services to persons in need in NW, SW and Far North regions.

In 2025, it is projected that the financial situation will worsen given the ongoing freeze and drastic reduction of humanitarian funding. Given the humanitarian reset, the re-prioritization process on ongoing with the sector having to reduce targets to 713,000 in 11 locations under inter-sector severity level 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RISK 1 Gender-Based Violence

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Conduct awareness and training sessions for HCT members on the Call to Action against GBV.
- Encourage all sectors to adopt specific actions to mitigate GBV risks in the humanitarian response according to the Call to Action against GBV (outcome 6) and the IASC Guidelines.
- Engage, support, and invest in local and national civil society organizations working directly on the protection of affected populations (included GBV), based on their comparative advantage and capacities.
- carry out awareness campaigns at national and regional levels, appointment of focal points

HC and HCT

- Carry out advocacy targeting Government authorities to put in place measures to address gender-based violence and conflict related sexual violence, CRSV. In keeping with objective 3 of the HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy, there is need for government and HCT to support the Call to Action against GBV rolled out in June 2023.
- Monthly and regular consultation and advocacy with donors to provide support for the Call to Action against GBV.

RISK 2 Unlawful impediments or restrictions to freedom of movement, siege and forced displacement

HC and HCT

- Strengthened civil-military coordination and access negotiation through targeted joint field missions by HCT members to reinforce the capability of crises-affected populations to safely move and access humanitarian assistance, basic services, and livelihoods.
- Sensitize the Government on the necessity to engage with all parties to the conflict for the full and unimpeded implementation of the humanitarian response, including through the implementation of the HCT Access Strategy.
- Advocate with local administrative authorities (Prefect/Senior Divisional Officer) on the issuance of civil and legal documentation, birth certificates and national identity cards for IDPs.

RISK 3 Child and Family Separation

AUTHORITIES

- Support the operationalization and implementation of the Charter of Mayors signed by 374 mayors and a roadmap for decentralized-level implementation, with a commitment to accelerate the birth registration rate at the national level, including in crisis-affected areas.
- Support the implementation of Protocols signed on the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups and reunification of Unaccompanied and Separated Children. Humanitarian activities in the 13 divisions in the NW and SW regions and in 4 divisions in FN.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Strengthen the prevention, mitigation measures and response to violence against children: through enhanced community-based organizations and relevant Government members, reinforced on CP issues, including Family separation, CAAFAG, MHPSS, GBV and PSEA, monitoring grave violations of children's rights, MRM Resolution 1612 mine risk awareness.
- Improve the quality data on child protection, harmonized tools and information sharing: introduction of the Child Protection Information Management System and MRMIMS+, in Cameroon; CP AoR designed a KoboToolbox for information collection on service mapping.

RISK 4 Torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment

HC and HCT

- Advocate with state security and defense forces to respect international law when carrying out cordon and searches for NSAG. Such operations should take place during the day and the SSDF to desist from carrying out night searches which expose civilian populations to other violations such as enforced disappearance, family separation and conflict related sexual violence.
- Strongly urge the government to train and hold their security organs responsible as duty bearers to respect the rights of suspects in conflict with the law, or those incarcerated after military operation and to allow them access to counsel and family visit. The practice of holding suspects for long periods without charges being preferred contravenes the law.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Actors to carry out regular training for state security and defense forces on IHL and IHRL.

RISK 5 Abduction, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention

HC and HCT

- Must engage with both parties to the conflict to respect and uphold international human rights law, international humanitarian law
- Advocate with state security and defense forces to ensure the protection of civilian lives and civilian property.
- Must Engage with government authorities, provide support, training and sensitization for law enforcement and security organs to respect fundamental human rights and ensure g civilians are treated with respect, in the conduct of their operations.
- Advocate with the state security forces duty bearers with the responsibility to protect civilian lives and property.
- Advocate with the military command to hold their soldiers and forces accountable when conducting arrest in compliance with the law. The advocacy will focus on stopping arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention, enforced disappearance of suspects or family members of NSAG.
- The HCT must continue to engage with both parties to the conflict ensure that civilian populations are protected from harm by respecting the principles of distinction and proportionality during attacks and where possible to stop night raids as this exposes civilians to a myriad other human rights violations such as torture, cruel and inhumane treatment and conflict related sexual violence.

End Notes

- ⁱ HNO 2025, NSW Cluster Monthly reports
- ⁱⁱ HCT Centrality of Protection 2023, objective 2
- ⁱⁱⁱ Protection monthly monitoring reports, dashboards
- ^{iv} Q4 Protection Monitoring Report NSW
- ^v Mid-Year Report NSW Cluster June 2024
- ^{vi} UNICEF Assessment on Children in Far North, NSW and East regions March 2024
- ^{vii} NSW protection monitoring reports
- ^{viii} Protection Cluster Monitoring Reports
- ^{ix} Protection rapid assessment Far North
- ^x OCHA Flash updates on Floods
- ^{xi} Multi sectoral assessment on flooding in Far North, Protection sector prioritization for the flood affected populations
- ^{xii} HLP AoR assessments in NSW/protection updates to the HCT
- ^{xiii} Protection Cluster Extreme North updates Jan 2024.
- ^{xiv} Voices of Cameroon 2023
- ^{xv} NSW Quarterly report December 2024
- ^{xvi} Rapid Child Protection assessment in Far North September 2024
- ^{xvii} NSW Protection Monitoring Reports/IOM DTM Oct/Nov 2024.
- ^{xviii} HNO narrative Far North Cluster
- ^{xix} Protection incident analysis Far North October 2024
- ^{xx} Protection Cluster NSW Monthly Update August 2024
- ^{xxi} Protection Cluster Monthly updates September 2024
- ^{xxii} protection monitoring dashboards

Methodology

The Protection Sector in consultation with the AoRs on Gender-Based Violence, Child Protection and Housing, Land and Property drafted and reviewed this report. The baseline is provided from various sources including monitoring reports carried out in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, multi-sectoral assessments, protection rapid assessments, safety audits, Voices of Cameroon 2024, P21 data, and advocacy notes on impact of lockdowns in the NSW regions.

Limitations

Access to hard-to-reach areas, a shrinking humanitarian space, access restrictions, limited partner presence and capacity, and reduced donor funding has posed significant challenges to operation. The year 2024 was difficult for the sector as many partners were forced to suspend activities due to funding shortfalls. Protection monitoring was adversely impacted and activities in the all three regions slowed down due to lack of operational capacity. Despite this, the sector engaged in a robust advocacy which resulted in increased funding for the Protection Sector in. Cameroon operation received the highest allocation in the 2024 CERF Under Funded Emergencies funding, marking an improvement over the 2023 allocation of \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million received in 2022. This funding increase came because of intensified attacks against civilian populations in NW&SW regions and the Lake Chad Basin. Joined up advocacy from 2023 with donors, enabled the sector fill in key coordination positions that had been vacant for years. A coordinator was appointed to head the Child Protection AoR secured a dedicated IMO, with iMMAP providing additional support for six months to assist with the HPC processes. .



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