



COI QUERY

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COI QUERY RESPONSE - Cameroon

Situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Douala and Yaoundé

1. Overview on IDPs and returnees in Cameroon

As of June 2021, OCHA reported there were 1 million IDPs in Cameroon, 465 757 returnees (who were previously IDPs) and 449 796 refugees, mostly from the Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria and Chad.¹ As of 5 August 2021, the number of IDPs within or displaced from the North-West and South-West regions of the country was estimated at 712 800.²

People displaced in the north of the country are reported to have limited livelihood activities and to lack access to health, education and water.³ Due to the large number of IDPs in these regions, there are tensions with the host communities over resources.⁴

In March 2021, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that ‘massive but underreported displacement in Cameroon’ continued to be caused by attacks carried out by armed groups in the Far-North region and ‘growing violence’ in the Northwest and Southwest regions. IDMC director stated that ‘many IDPs look for a safe haven in Cameroon’s largest cities, but there they face a new set of challenges in accessing services and employment and often end up displaced again as a result of disasters’, adding that ‘If displacement continues at this rate and goes unreported, humanitarians will not be able to evaluate people’s needs and deliver effective assistance’.⁵

In its 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan, OCHA reported that returnees ‘face specific risks and vulnerabilities in terms of protection, including those related to civil documentation, the security of property and persons and equitable access to basic social services and land in their locality of origin’.⁶

Since 2017, a joint initiative of IOM and EU for migrant protection and reintegration in Cameroon, is working on the country to facilitate the return of Cameroonian migrants and to support their reintegration.⁷ Sources reported the return of migrants under the specific initiative in several time periods.⁸ According to IOM, between January and June 2021, 233 Cameroonians returned to their

¹ OCHA, Cameroon, Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue N.21, 21 July 2021, [url](#)

² OCHA, Cameroon, Situation Report, last updated 5 August 2021, [url](#)

³ UNHCR and UNDP, Partnership on Forced Displacement, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 18; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, Cameroon, 3 March 2021, [url](#)

⁴ UNHCR and UNDP, Partnership on Forced Displacement, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 18

⁵ IDMC, Out of sight: Cameroon’s downward spiral of violence and displacement, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

⁶ OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan Cameroon, 27 March 2020, [url](#), p. 58

⁷ IOM, 121 Cameroonian Returnees Arrive Home Safely with IOM Assistance, 24 April 2018, [url](#)

⁸ IOM, 121 Cameroonian Returnees Arrive Home Safely with IOM Assistance, 24 April 2018, [url](#); VOA, Cameroon Receives First Returning Asylum-Seekers, Ex-Separatists from Nigeria, 2 January 2020, [url](#); IOM, Migrant Return and Reintegration: Complex, Challenging, Crucial, 6 July 2021, [url](#); Delegation of the European Union to Gabon, Sao Tomé-et-Principe and CEEAC, Migration: EU-IOM joint work gives migrants hope for new start in home countries, 7 August 2018, [url](#)

country.⁹ The same source reported that 5 450 Cameroonian migrants in total have returned to Cameroon since 2017.¹⁰ The IOM-EU initiative provides medical and psychological support to the returnees, as well reintegration support.¹¹

According to the USDOS, during 2020, the government took some steps to ‘promote the safe, voluntary return, resettlement, or local integration of IDPs in the Far North, Northwest, and Southwest Regions’, by establishing disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration centres. However, the same source reports that these centres were inadequately resourced and assistance to IDPs and returnees was provided by ‘relief actors’, with minimal governmental support.¹² Furthermore, according to the USDOS report:

‘in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, the government did not facilitate efforts to ensure unfettered access for humanitarian actors to deliver aid to persons in need. It made some efforts, however, to provide urgently needed in kind assistance to crisis-affected IDPs in the Northwest and Southwest Regions based on its Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan. This assistance was distributed to populations without an assessment of their needs and only to persons in accessible areas, especially in regional capital cities.’¹³

For the general security situation in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, it is possible to consult a [EASO COI Query Response](#), published on 14 June 2021.

2. IDPs and returnees in Douala and Yaoundé

The significant displacement of Anglophone populations has strained host communities and service delivery capacities in the neighbouring Littoral and West regions, and in the main urban centres of Douala and Yaoundé.¹⁴

By September 2020, there were approximately 24 800 refugees and 9 600 asylum seekers reported to be in need of protection and assistance in the urban settings of Yaoundé and Douala.¹⁵ Furthermore, 45 000 urban refugees and their host communities in Yaoundé (Centre) and 40 000 urban refugees and their host communities in Douala (Littoral), most of them from CAR, are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021.¹⁶

Around 25 % of IDPs in Yaoundé report having lost their identification documents. Lack of documents also prevents the returnees from proving the legal possession of their properties, leading to property conflicts including eviction.¹⁷

In its January 2021 report, the World Bank outlined that ‘the capital, Yaoundé, offered a wider range of economic activities, but IDPs have still struggled due to a lack of financial capital and equipment. The lack of identification documents further exacerbates IDPs’ vulnerability, increasing the risk of

⁹ IOM, Migrant Return and Reintegration: Complex, Challenging, Crucial, 6 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰ IOM, Migrant Return and Reintegration: Complex, Challenging, Crucial, 6 July 2021, [url](#)

¹¹ IOM, Migrant Return and Reintegration: Complex, Challenging, Crucial, 6 July 2021, [url](#)

¹² USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 30 March 2021, [url](#), p. 27

¹³ USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 30 March 2021, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁴ World Bank Group, The Socio-Political Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon: Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts, 21 June 2021, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁵ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 84

¹⁶ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 41

¹⁷ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 19

exploitation and preventing them from accessing education and government assistance'.¹⁸

There are severe needs in Yaoundé, the Centre region, in relation to child protection, gender-based violence (GBV) and education needs of IDPs, as well as to the needs of urban refugees.¹⁹ OCHA reported that:

'1,033 refugee women and girls have been identified as being at risk in Yaounde and Douala . These risks range from single women and women headed households to GBV survivors; the later representing 12,6 per cent of the women and girls at risk. Whilst a response in terms of psychosocial support and assistance for legal proceeding exist, there is a need to strengthen the response in terms of material support that will enable survivors to overcome their economic vulnerability situation. There are other protection vulnerabilities among the urban refugee population that need suitable response, particularly for refugees with disabilities (more than 300 individuals), older refugees and single parents.'²⁰

Citing NGOs as sources, USODS reported that in 2020, criminals exploited people in 'forced labour and sex trafficking in the Bonaberi neighbourhood in Douala – which hosts hundreds of IDPs'.²¹

2.1 Women

Information on IDPs and returnee women in Doula and Yaoundé was scarce among the sources consulted by EASO within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

During 2019, a project funded by the High Commission of Canada to Cameroon and implemented by Bridgers Association Cameroon aimed to empower Internally Displaced women and girls in Cameroon, namely in Bamenda. Under this project, various training workshops were organised, tools, equipment and seed capital were donated and psychological support was provided.²²

According to OCHA, girls and women are targets for sexual abuse and exploitation during their displacement and their stay in host communities. Furthermore, women IDPs recognised as female heads of households who are depended from the host communities for their basic needs became 'easy targets for exploitation and abuse including of sexual nature'. Because of the Far North Crisis and the crisis in the Anglophone regions, in general, girls belong to the primary categories 'at risk among all affected groups of IDPs, returnees and affected host communities, especially in rural areas and hard-to-reach areas'.²³

Freedom House reported that displaced women are vulnerable to gender-based violence.²⁴ The same source reported that during 2020 'some internally displaced women have also resorted to prostitution in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala'.²⁵

In Douala, during March 2020, UNFPA trained around 100 internally displaced women, who fled

¹⁸ World Bank Group, The Socio-Political Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon: Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts, 21 June 2021, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁹ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 40

²⁰OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 84

²¹ USDOS, 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cameroon, 1 July 2021, [url](#)

²² Bridgers Association Cameroon, Economic Empowerment of Internally Displaced Women & Girls in Bamenda, n.d., [url](#)

²³ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), pp. 53, 55

²⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, Cameroon, 3 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, Cameroon, 3 March 2021, [url](#)

Northwest and Southwest regions, in capacity building activities.²⁶

2.2 Persons with disabilities

Detailed information on IDPs and returnees with disabilities in Doula and Yaoundé in Cameroon was scarce among the sources consulted by EASO within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

OCHA reported that people with disabilities who ‘have lost their usual support during displacement are subjected to disproportionate suffering’.²⁷ Furthermore, the same source indicated that ‘people with disabilities are more likely to be exposed to danger from attacks, including because of barriers to escaping and staying out of harm’s way, and because of the degradation of the support systems which existed before the crisis’.²⁸ In its 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan, OCHA reported that ‘older people, people living with disabilities, with chronic illness, and pregnant and lactating women, are often left behind when families flee violence, increasing their vulnerabilities and depriving them of the social safety net on which their survival and wellbeing depend’.²⁹ The same report added that the people who are left behind remain in areas that are unsafe for humanitarian workers to reach and where basic social services are not accessible.³⁰

Additional information can be found on the related EASO COI Queries Responses on [Cameroon: People with disabilities](#), published on the 23 July 2021, and on [Cameroon: Treatment of people with HIV/AIDS](#), published on the 11 May 2021.

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²⁶ UNFPA, Empowering Internally Displaced Girls and Women for the North West and South West regions, 20 March 2020, [url](#)

²⁷ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 23 June 2020, [url](#), p.20

²⁸ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 23 June 2020, [url](#), p.20

²⁹ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p.10

³⁰ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, Cameroon, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p.10

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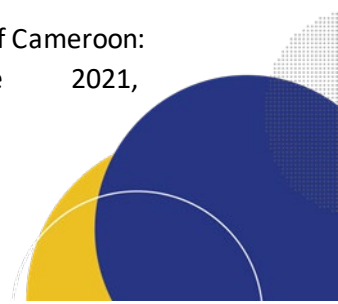
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