

Bafoussam 3 and Mbouda Shelter Mission Report



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Recommendations

1. For future trainings, the code of conduct training should be given at the beginning of the training and done by a person who is present in the room.
2. While it is necessary to be able to have a separate form for referring protection cases, this required enumerators to collect the same information twice from one household. It is recommended that each form have a cascading option, if protection cases are found while assessing for shelter or if shelter needs are found in assessing for protection. This can be done in Kobo by having a group appear only if that situation applies. It would therefore reduce the confusion and time of data collection. This should be applied to the entire project for next year.
3. For data protection reasons, a separate Kobo account should be created for this exercise to ensure ease of data collection across phones and tablets and quick deactivation when the exercise is completed.
4. Data collection should begin early in the day to be able to identify people while they are still at home, roughly around 7:30 AM. Equally the hours at the end of the day, 14:30-17:30 was also a time where IDPs were returning to the house. Enumerators should be entitled to a break in the middle of the day to ensure they can get lunch and rest to avoid them working for 10 hours+ a day.
5. Continue to sensitize Intersos data collectors on the differences between collective shelter, apartment, and house. Frequently, enumerators perceive apartment complexes or houses where different rooms are rented as collective shelters. It is critical in the assessment to ensure that collective shelters are understood as buildings not designed for living being used as a shelter. Typically, collective shelter inhabitants are hosted for free and not renting out rooms.
6. For internally displaced people, UNHCR should try to capture both location from which the person is displaced to verify additional information that ensure that those interviewed are indeed IDPs and information on the shelter in the area of origin. By including a question on conditions of the shelter in the area of origin, it will help in informing on long-term durable solutions but also ensure that IDPs are understanding the differences in the conditions of their current shelters and shelters in their area of origin.
7. The UNHCR tool includes only one question for photos. UNHCR should adapt their tool to be in line with the Shelter Cluster tool which has photos after questions on type of house, condition of shelter, and available NFIs in the house.
8. Continue to work with the Protection Cluster and the Housing, Land, and Property Area of Responsibility on advocacy messages to end the exploitation of IDPs by landlords. Advocacy should also be targeted at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.
9. Continue to work in synergy with UNHABITAT to see if there are ways to upscale social housing projects such as the pilots they are conducting to make housing more affordable for displaced people and other vulnerable persons. There is also a need to focus on the habitability of existing units and ensure that these shelters are not presenting physical risks to their occupants.
10. Prior to this assessment, UNHCR had noted that Intersos had done a lot of the shelter assessments in a community style. This mission was a good way to ensure that needs were being confirmed at the household level. Furthermore, internally displaced people remarked on the fact that other registrations were difficult to attend or that some people not IDPs could more easily register for assistance in community registrations. Intersos should share the list of locations where they had done community registrations instead of shelter visits to ensure verification of the accuracy of the data collection.
11. Shelter Cluster team to analyse how the data collection in these two areas compares with the ongoing household assessment being conducted for the Multisector Needs Assessment by IOM and OCHA.
12. Continued to advocate that agencies use a house-to-house form of beneficiary registration rather than community-style registrations.

Training of Enumerators



Enumerators doing a simulation in Mbouda 30th September

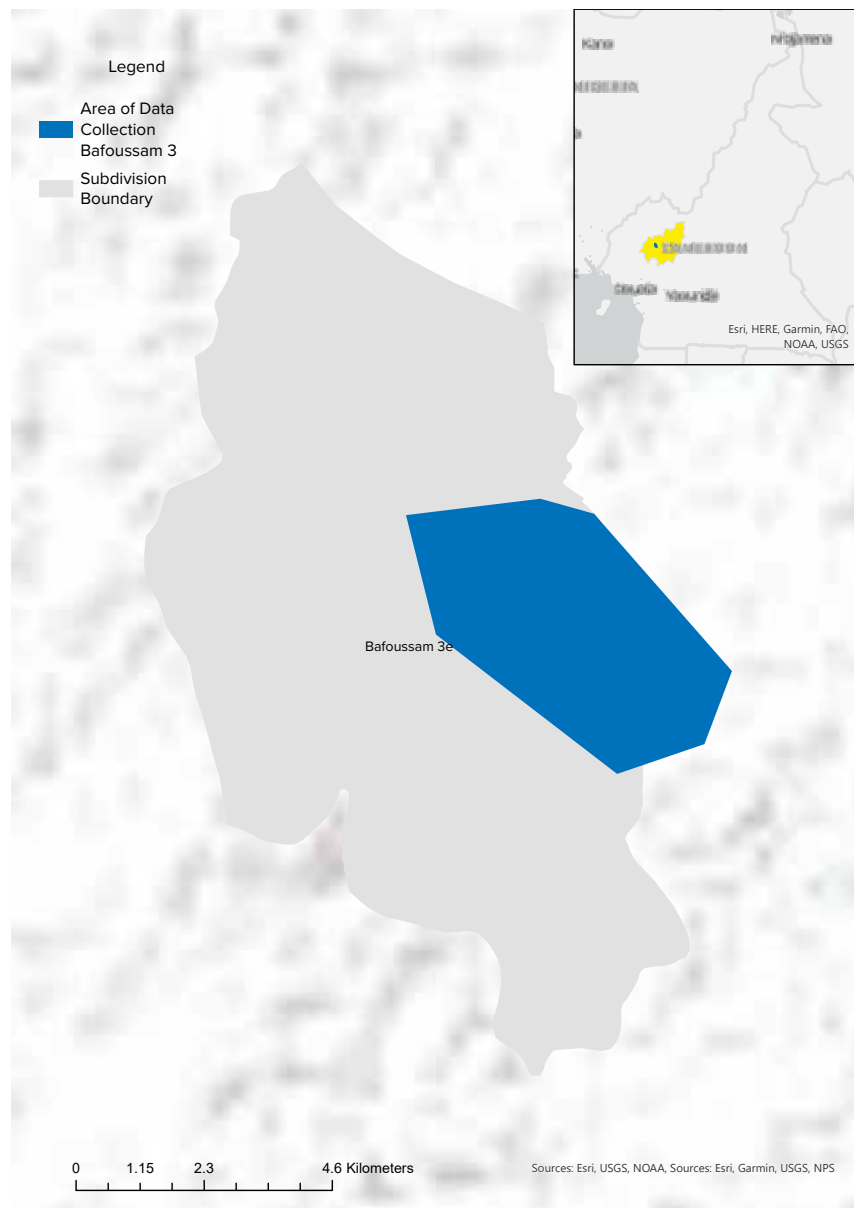
With the objective of increasing the number of people assessed for shelter needs in the hosting regions of the West and Littoral regions where UNHCR has the aim of extending its Shelter and NFI support, UNHCR in collaboration with Intersos conducted a training of enumerators hired by Intersos on the 26th of September. As Shelter Cluster coordinator, I presented the overview of the data collection tool for Shelter and NFI and the criteria that we were using for the selection of beneficiaries. Given the fact that the tools presented were new to the enumerators, much time was spent in going over some basic concepts of humanitarian shelter and also in terms of protection needs.

During the training, the normal UNHCR Code of Conduct that was supposed to introduce some of these basic concepts was given at the end of the training and it was done online on teams. For future trainings, **the code of conduct training should be given at the beginning of the training and done by a person who is present in the room.** This would make the training more personal and ensure the engagement of the participants in the training.

Given that the tools and concepts were new and some participants struggled to arrive on time due to traffic, a one day training was not sufficient, as there was no time for the simulation. Also there was not enough time for the IM associate ahead of time for the installation of the tools on the phones. This meant that UNHCR colleagues had to ensure simulations were done at the field level on the first day of data collection at each location. This is a good way to simulate the data collection, but took away from the rate of data collection that could have been done during that time. It is suggested to ensure that **future trainings especially when new tools are introduced have two days.**

Given that UNHCR changed the original objective of this mission to also include cash for protection, it required enumerators to use two data collection tools. This required some households to give similar information twice and it lengthens the time the household has to give to the survey. Next time it is recommended that the tools be combined to the most essential indicators for both areas of programming. Furthermore, for data protection reasons, a **separate Kobo account should be created for this exercise to ensure ease of data collection across phones and tablets and quick deactivation when the exercise is completed.**

Data Collection in Bafoussam 3

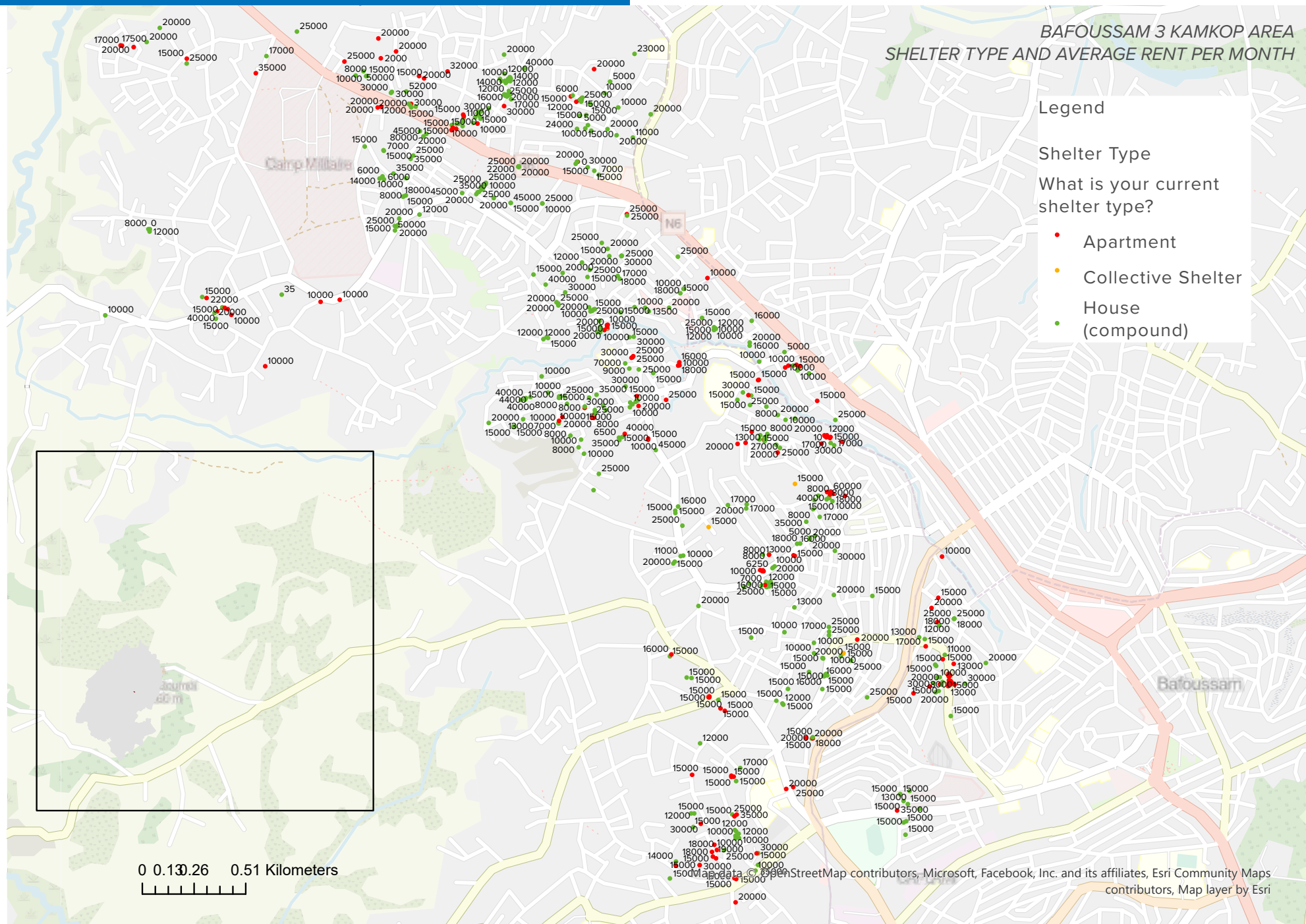


The data collection in Bafoussam 3 took place from the 27th to the 29th of September. The area of the data collection was concentrated in the following quarters of Kamkop, Kouogouo, Ngouache, and Toket. The area has an estimated 21,459 buildings according to Open Street Map. Over the 3 days, 593 households were assessed for shelter needs and for being internally displaced persons. This means that IDP shelters have approximately a 2.8% proportional rate in the quarters assessed. The number of people living in each of these households totals 3729 internally displaced people living in this quarter.

All enumerators were instructed that they had to visit the shelters of the IDPs which would help in ensuring that the questionnaire was properly completed and representative and that they could observe shelter conditions instead of just asking questions. This required an approach of snowball sampling as enumerators had to ask IDPs where other IDPs were living. Many IDPs could be found in compounds where apartments had been made out of houses or rooms in horizontal buildings. Some of the shelters were located in the back of shops that IDPs had created to support livelihood activities. 88% of the households were renting their shelters informally and many had fears that they could be evicted by landlords who were trying to increase the price of the lodging. According to this data and according to observations of various shelters visited, it would be difficult to conduct a rental market assessment of the various shelters, due to the fact that the price of rent often didn't match the conditions of the shelter. This shows a trend of exploitation on behalf of landlords who are overcharging IDPs for often inadequate shelter. The average cost of an apartment was 17,742 XAF per month, and the average cost of a house was 17,650 XAF per month. The average income of those assessed in this area of Bafoussam 3 is 40,469 XAF. 95% of households said that renting and affordability was their priority shelter need.

One of the challenges for data collection was the fact that if enumerators worked during normal working hours, many IDPs were not home and needed to go to the market or to practice their own livelihood activities. This supports the future timing orientations that data collection should start early in the day before IDPs go to work and around the later afternoon hours between 14:30-17:30 when IDPs are returning from their job site. In walking on the second day of data collection with one enumerator, approximately one hour was spent without successfully finding IDPs in their shelters, this resulted in lower data collection rates in Bafoussam.

Overall Map of Data Collection Bafoussam 3



Shelter Conditions: Bafoussam 3



Enumerators walking in Kamkop quarter in Bafoussam 3

71% of shelters assessed were identified as houses or compounds, while 28% were labelled as apartments. The majority of houses and apartments were either mudbrick (46%) or concrete (53%) structures with a few other houses or apartments also using bamboo. 1% of the shelters identified were labelled as collective shelters. Although it was covered in the training that a collective shelter is a building not designed for habitation being used as shelter such as churches, businesses, schools, mosques, and government buildings, it seems like the shelters that were identified as collective shelters were in fact homes being used by more than one IDP. 5 of the entries that were labelled as collective shelter are showing the same picture of the same number of people, so it **will be necessary to clarify this data with the enumerator and the people interviewed. The enumerator should have instead visited each of the rooms being rented as an apartment** rather than to collectively interview the same IDPs outside of the same shelter. This shows the limitations of not going through the simulation fully during the first day of training. Furthermore, enumerators are not familiar with shelter types and maybe were not listening when the training covered this concept.

53% of the shelters assessed had observable damages. 35% of the damages were caused by lack of maintenance and 17% of the damages were caused by degradation of the shelter caused by overuse of many people. .51% of damages were caused by natural disasters such as wind, rain, or mudslides. 3 households were labelled as having been damaged during the course of the conflict, but given that the conflict activity has not touched Bafoussam, it is likely that the IDP respondents confused the question with referring to the shelter in the area of origin rather than their current shelter. This **shows that the enumerator needed to do a better job of explaining the questionnaire to the IDPs. Likely the enumerator needed subsequent coaching.**

Of the 53% of houses reporting to have damage and of not being in a good state, 85% of shelters had roof damage, 57% had damage to their walls, 23% had damage to their doors, 22% had damage to their windows. 21% of shelters were found to have minor damages (Up to 30% of the roof is impacted, there is an open space where water may leak and air may pass) and 22% were found to have moderate damages to the roofs (Up to 50% of the roof is impacted or there are many holes where rain/leaks or air may pass). In looking at some of the shelters which were marked as being completely destroyed, the pictures look more like they are minor or moderate damages. 3% of the roofs were labelled to be near collapsing, although in some photos, **it is not clear if the enumerators labelled the state of the roof correctly, though in some photos**



A roof collapsing in Bafoussam 3.



Several apartments where IDPs are taking shelter in Bafoussam 3.

it is clear that the roof is collapsing. 25% of shelters that reported having damage to the walls had minor damages indicating some blemishes on the walls and a few cracks in the walls, while 5% of those reporting damages to the walls reported moderate damages with major damages to the walls. 6% of shelters reported that more than half the windows in their shelter were damaged, while 4% reported that their windows were in tact with some holes in them. 9% of shelters reported to have minor damage to their doors with some holes but still lockable at night and when they leave their shelters. 2% had moderate damages to the door, while 2% reported severe damages to their doors.

Overcrowding in these shelters was common. 56% of the assessed households had less than 3.5m² per person. 8% of households were just at the sphere standard of 3.5m² per person. While the assessed areas are primarily urban setting, 48% of the cooking facilities were located outside of the shelter in a shared space, 40% cooked outside not in a shared space, and 10% of the shelters had cooking space inside their home. 89% of the shelters assessed used a shared latrine outside of their shelter, while 8% had a latrine inside their shelter, while 4% said they didn't use a latrine and were defecating in the open air. Open air defecation is spurred on by the issue of overcrowding and the subsequent poor conditions of the sanitation facilities, with 83% of households having bad condition latrines. IDPs talked about the need for desludging with so many people using the same latrines in their compounds. The average ratio to number of people living in the shelters was 6 people to one functioning latrine. Only 33% of households surveyed had access to functional washing facilities. On average, each household has 16 litres of potable water per day, demonstrating a need for households to access enough drinking water at the shelter level.

96% of shelters in Bafoussam 3 had mattresses, but the quantity of the mattresses for each of the members of the household was often lacking. For these households with mattresses there were 5 household members on average sleeping on one mattress. Due to the lack of adequate bedding materials and space, 18% of households reported having members of their household being forced to sleep on the ground. This means that 1294 are reportedly sleeping on the ground each night which represents 35% of the total people composing the members of each shelter. 54% of households had a bedframe, while 40% had sleeping mats (or grass mats).

Development Projects: UNHABITAT pilot shelter

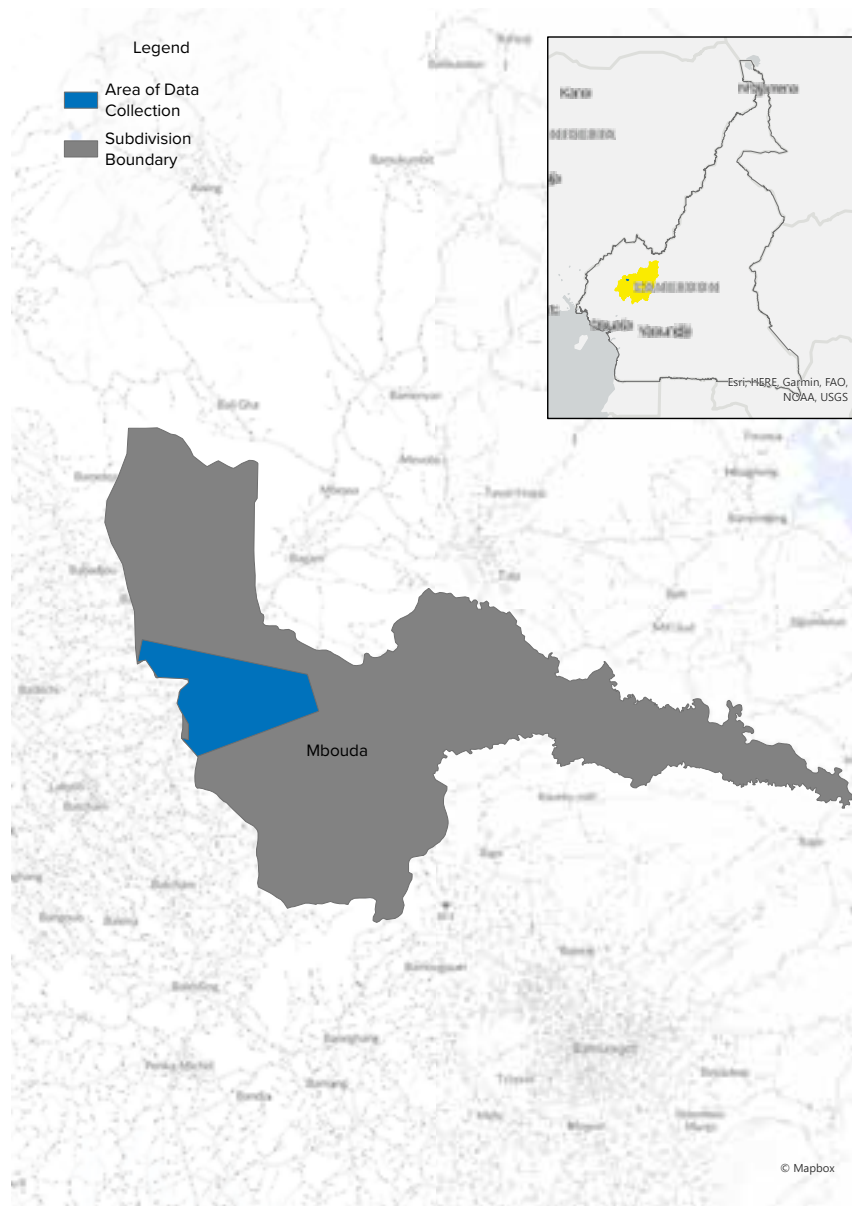


UNHABITAT is currently conducting a project aimed at improving adequate and affordable housing for IDPs who are taking shelter in the West and Littoral Regions. The project locations are in select quarters of Douala, Bafoussam, Loum, Dshang, and Babadjou. During the mission, I visited the project site which was being implemented as a cooperation between Bafoussam 3 council and UNHABITAT. Thus far, the structure of one of the pilot shelters has been built. The cost of the shelter is 5,000,000 XAF per unit (\$8,188) with an aim of using all local products to cut costs and to have less impact on the environment. In comparison, the normal construction of a house in Cameroon can cost between 20,000,000 and 30,000,000 XAF. The structure of the shelter is made from mudbricks which are produced from manual brick making machines. IDPs are engaged as workers in the production of the bricks. The process of manual brick making takes approximately one month, so the overall rate is 8000 bricks during a two-week period. The structure of the house has taken one month to build. The final unit will include 3 bedrooms with closets, kitchen, bathroom (flush toilet), tanks for water, solar panels, granite tiled floors, and a garden for food and income generation activities. Given that there has been an interruption in the financing, the first unit is expected to be finished by November 2023.

Currently, there is only the one pilot unit and it is up to the council to select which vulnerable family will stay in the shelter. The shelter should accommodate a traditional family of 6 (2 parents, 4 children). The project would be a turn-key project but currently given that there is only one unit, the length of stay is based on the amount of time that the IDP family can find their own accommodation. Currently there is not enough funding to build additional units, but the UNHABITAT coordinator stated that they would like to build at least 50 units if funding is available. The land where the shelter is built is owned by the Bafoussam 3 council and is dedicated for social and development activities.

Given that lack of housing policy and the need for adequate housing, this project has potential to support IDPs with their housing needs, but it is important to define the length of stay and criteria for selection for which IDPs can live in these adequate shelters. Right now the cost per beneficiary remains high. It is important to **focus advocacy messages on the need for landlords to end their exploitation of IDPs for inadequate shelters** and also **to improve the habitability of existing housing units where IDPs are currently living**. This requires support from the Ministry of Habitat and Urbanism and also the property owners.

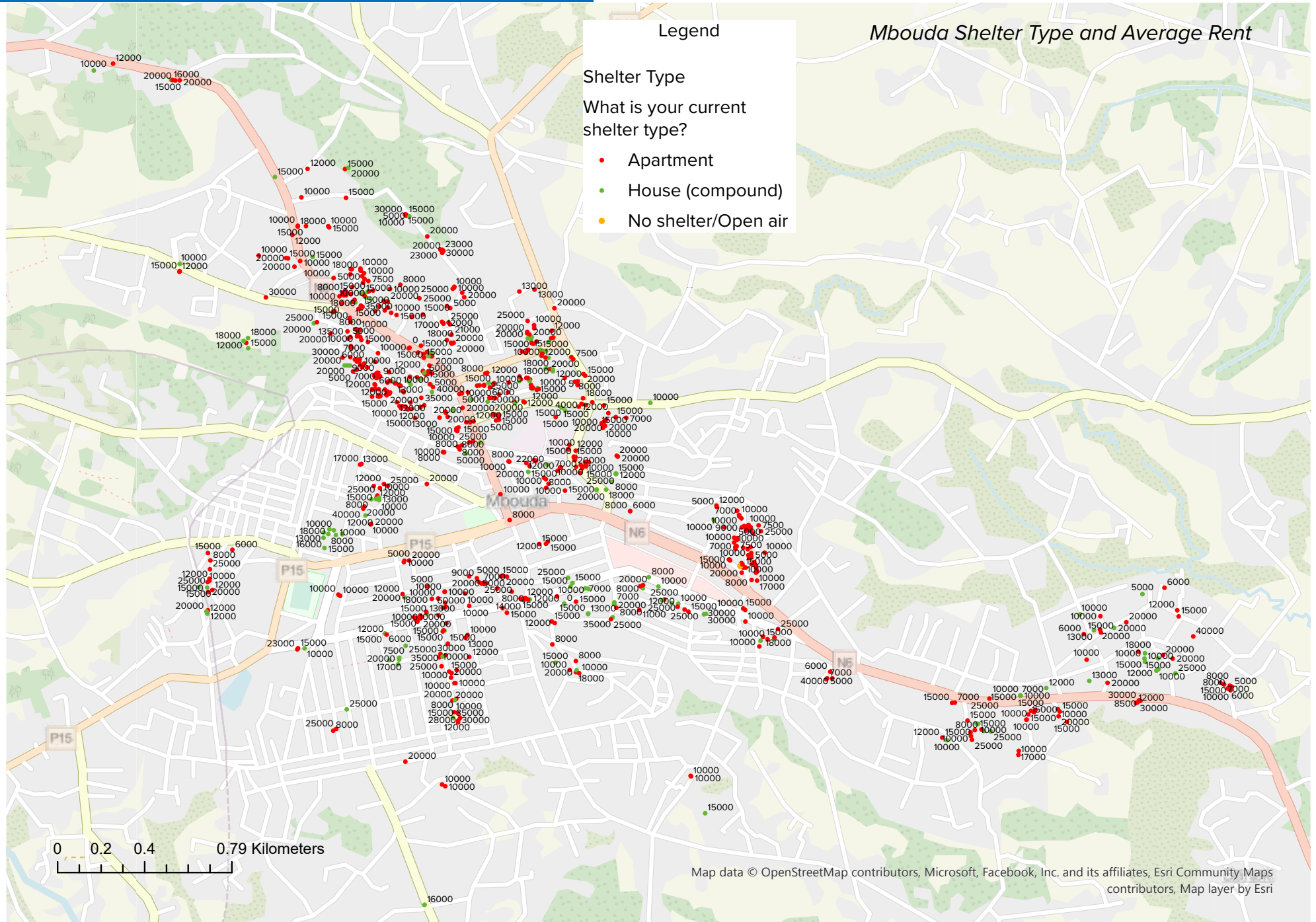
Data Collection in Mbouda



Data collection in Mbouda began on Saturday the 30th of September and concluded on the 2nd of October. Despite the first day of data collection, on Sunday and Monday, it was decided to begin the data collection early around 7:30 AM to ensure that IDPs would be at their homes before going to church. On Sunday, IDPs had both a market day and various church and family meeting obligations, so several households visited, IDPs were not home and had to be revisited or were missed entirely. According to Open Street Map, there are approximately 17,144 buildings in the area assessed meaning that IDP shelters had a 5% prevalence rate in the area assessed. This represents 798 households of approximately 5505 family members. The area is along a crucial stretch leading to Bamenda and it is some of the first villages in the West Region when arriving from Bamenda. Mbouda is approximately 26 km from Santa in the Northwest region. Some of the IDPs had settled in shelters on both sides of the main N6 road which lead back to Santa and then Bamenda. The villages that were assessed in Mbouda include Banock, Bamessingue, Nylon, Lepi, and Tap among others.

The approach of starting earlier in the day seemed to be a successful one and enabled the enumerators to focus on shelter needs. Several of the beneficiaries remarked that they had participated in registrations before but only in community style. Given that some of these households had vulnerable family members including the disabled and elderly, it was remarked that it was good of UNHCR and Intersos to observe how they were living and to see the shelters where they were living. It was noted that Intersos had previously visited the village of Banock and conducted a community style registration. For shelter programming and for many other types of sectoral programming, a household visit to the shelter is the only way of truly assessing the shelter and household item needs that a household may have. In the review and cleaning of the data, **UNHCR should pay attention to the records in the master database that are similar and validate those that were conducted at the household level as it may be more accurate than the community registration.** Furthermore, given that Intersos had made the mistake of doing community-style registration in several other locations throughout the four months, **Intersos should compile a list of the locations where they did not use the house-to-house methodology, so that the records can be reviewed with more scrutiny, and to verify those records that may not have accurate information.** Community registrations enable a lot more misleading information to be included. During the observations with enumerators it was revealed that some of the IDPs had been displaced by the attacks

Overall Map of Data Collection in Mbouda



Shelter Conditions in Mbouda



Interior of a shelter alongside the N6 main highway leading to Santa and Bamenda



on Big Babanki and that other data collection efforts such as the IOM MSNA had not yet passed. This shows that for rapid response and for household assessments, house to house verification is a sound approach in picking up on needs. The **Shelter Cluster team will analyse this current round of MSNA and how it compares to the area covered.**

Similar to the situation in Bafoussam 3, many of those assessed were found to be informally renting their accommodation representing 84% of those assessed, while 14% had a formal agreement to rent their accommodation. The average cost of rent in Mbouda is 14,614 XAF per month, with rent for a house being on average 15,442 XAF and an apartment 14,375 XAF per month. The average income that households estimated in a month per household was approximately 33,700 XAF per month. 89% of households were paying 30% or more of their income on rent each month. In terms of shelter needs, while a few households expressed interest in having some materials to do minor fix ups, 95% mentioned renting and affordability as their major needs.

77% of those assessed were found to have fears of eviction. During my accompaniment of enumerators, it was observed that some of the enumerators either didn't ask the question or were using observational techniques to answer this question. I encouraged them to change the way they asked the question to ask if they had had any threats of the landlords previously about being thrown out of their shelter. It was also noted that IDPs often answered this question in the hypothetical, supposing that if they didn't pay the rent then they could be evicted though they had never come across this situation in real life. For the future and to **improve understanding by both parties, it may be recommendable to change the questionnaire to ask whether inhabitants have received any threats in the past about being thrown out** of their existing shelter.

78% of those households were assessed were apartments, while 22% of the shelters were houses. One of the shelters was labelled to be having no shelter and living out in the open air. This seems to be an inconsistency in the data, as the person is sleeping on the ground but not sleeping out in the open air. Further there was no shelter that was assessed as having total roof destruction.

73% of the shelters assessed were labelled as having damages. 65% of the shelters were found to be damaged due to lack of maintenance and reluctance of



Shelter observed which had foundational risks where a family with many protection issues was residing.



landlords to make improvements to their shelters. 4% of damages were caused by natural disasters such as weather events. A small proportion of entries in Mbouda (approximately 15) stated that their shelter was damaged due to conflict causes. Likely this was a confusion created by the IDPs considering their shelter in the area of origin. In the future, **UNHCR could avoid this confusion by using the full Shelter Cluster questionnaire which asks internally displaced people what the condition of their shelter is in the area of origin and also about the condition of their current shelter.** 62% of the shelters damaged had damages in their roofs, 47% had damages to their walls, 30% had damages to their windows, and 28% had damages to their doors.

As much as possible, enumerators were encouraged to observe the shelters and were given descriptions in the questionnaire to tag the severity of damage in the shelters they were observing. In describing the extent of these damages to their shelters, 40% had minor damages, 17% had moderate damages, while 5% reported severe damages. 26% had minor damages, 17% had moderate damages, and 5% had severe damage. Upon the observations in the field, one household that had foundational cracks and was clearly at risk was observed. It is important in analysing the data that UNHCR's support aims to increase IDPs' access to better shelter and does not contribute to IDPs being left behind in at risk shelters. **UNHCR's cash for rent should look to helping IDPs recover any debts in rent that they have and also ensure that families are able to move to shelter that lessens their exposure to protection and physical risks.** 15% of the shelters were found to have some holes in the windows. 11% were reporting that half of the windows in their shelter were damaged, while 4% of shelters reporting to have many windows damage leaving their shelters with many openings. 16% of shelters had minor damages to the door with holes present but not being able to lock the door at night. 11% had major holes in the door of which one could stick their hands through and which was comprising the lockability of the door.

Overwhelmingly, lack of financing was the main reason for not doing the repairs, but also landlords had been requested to make repairs to shelters by the occupants but had refused to do so. In a couple of cases observed, some IDPs who were struggling with rent, mentioned that the landlord had refused to repair roofs that were leaking, doors that had holes, and other aspects of the shelter. In one case the landlord had threatened to reduce the habitable space of the unit in order to install a store, as the family was not able to pay for the entire space. In another case, IDPs had fears about



their personal security and the risk of theft, as the landlord was refusing to fix the gate to the compound where their apartment units were located.

55% of IDPs were living with less than 3.5m² per person. Several IDPs were living with multiple family members, and one displaced person renting an apartment, mentioned that their shelter was the place where IDPs would often take shelter when a new conflict activity impacted their area of origin, therefore they had several times become host to IDPs in the same premises. 87% of those assessed had mattresses, but similar to the situation in Bafoussam, the ratio of mattresses to household residents was 5 people per mattress. 14% of households reported to have shelter occupants that were forced to sleep on the ground at night. This represents some 2771 people which is 41% of the people living in the shelters assessed.



In Mbouda, there were more cases of children who were living in Mbouda while accessing the bilingual school. They had been sent there by their parents who were supporting them financially. This is representative of the interruption of educational services caused by the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest. This population though is not the target of the financial assistance as costs were being borne by people who were not located in the premises. The area of Banock was also a location where protection partners including UNHCR had conducted previous interventions to support victims of GBV, unaccompanied children, and legal cases. Given that many protection incidents are caused by the inadequate conditions of the accommodation that IDPs are forced to resort to, a house to house methodology also helps in identifying more victims of protection incidents.

How to Ensure humanitarian shelter standards in a context of a housing crisis

Cameroon's housing sector without considering the impacts of internal displacement was already in crisis. As witnessed in this assessment, the rental market is unregulated and the cost of constructing a house often is unaffordable for the majority of families who are below the poverty line. Land scarcity and speculation on land in urban areas is also increasing the price of land. The housing supply has a significant deficit which is estimated to be around 2.5 million in urban areas of the country.¹ Furthermore, UNHABITAT's baseline study for their pilot project on housing found that only 2.8% of IDPs and 26.6% of host community members have accommodation that doesn't present any risks in terms of security, health, or have presence of infestation.² Given these bleak figures and the challenges, what kind of outcomes should shelter projects done by humanitarians expect to achieve given that humanitarian financing of rental assistance is not sustainable? Even with livelihoods support, if the IDPs are working in informal jobs that are not regularized, it is unlikely that in the long-run that employment will sustain their access to affordable and decent housing. Below are some recommendations for humanitarian shelter programming in this context.

1. Humanitarian shelter agencies should ensure that they are targeting less people with longer-term conditional cash for rent programming. Duration of coverage could be from 6-12 months ensuring that the household can settle previous debts and move to shelters that meet the following criteria:
 - Don't have leaks or don't let air pass through areas that air is supposed to pass
 - Ensure over 3.5m² per person in the shelter
 - Enable the inhabitants to feel physically safe
 - Inhabitants are satisfied with the ventilation, privacy, and personal space of the shelter.
 - Are not in areas the authorities have deemed unsuitable for housing (within 5m of road or waterway) or on a steep slope which could expose the shelter's risk to natural disaster.
2. If occupants are in housing that is inadequate and not meeting these standards, it is important that the assistance is conditional to them moving to better housing. If they are not willing to move, then it is unlikely that cash for rent is a good area of programming for that beneficiary.
3. In collaboration with the owners of the properties, humanitarian agencies should look to ensure that any blemishes in housing failing to meet the criteria above are either repaired by the landlords (through advocacy and by putting in place [a tenure agreement](#)) or by minor repairs in that shelter after receiving the agreement from the landlord.
4. Agencies wanting to just donate cash or multipurpose cash to cover some basic needs, should not expect that shelter will improve with cash only, as it requires technical assistance (described in the steps above). Giving more cash will only exacerbate some of the challenges of the existing housing crisis and put beneficiaries further at risk of protection incidents, disease, and poverty, further harming their chances to get on the pathway to durable solutions.

1 <https://housingfinanceafrica.org/app/uploads/2022/12/Cameroon.pdf>

2 https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/11/rapport_etude_de_base_draft_3.pdf