

Ichim

Ichim is a village that is part of Oku-Subdivision under the administration of the Elak-Oku Council.¹ The council estimated that Ichim had a population of 9000 people in 2012², but according to satellite imagery projects, the population may only be 4000 people as of recent.³ 1337 IDPs were reported to be in Ichim as of August 2022.⁴ 31% of IDPs arrived in the early years of the crisis prior to 202, 30% of IDPs arrived to Ichim between March to August 2022, and 22% arrived in early January and February, 17% arrived in 2021. Most IDPs in Ichim are from other locations in Bui Division. 100 returnees are reported to also have returned to Ichim since their time of displacement, returning to Ichim between 2021 and February 2022, returning from other locations in Oku and also from Fundong Subdivision in Boyo. The reason for returning to Ichim was that they received no assistance in their location of displacement.⁵ In January 2023, the state security forces have deployed to Oku Subdivision due to the reports of attacks on civilians and destructions by the Non-State Armed Groups.⁶ Security risks in Ichim have been reported to be the threat of armed attacks, shooting, and also theft. Protection risks in Ichim have been arbitrary detention and arrest, forced child recruitment, and youth pregnancy.⁷

37% of IDPs are hosted in good condition mudbrick houses, unfinished mudbrick houses, and damaged timber/wood houses. 37% are renting one room apartments, two-room apartments, and concrete houses of two rooms or less. The average cost of rent is reported to be 4000 XAF per month. 25% of IDPs are self-settled and squatting in good condition wooden houses, unfinished wooden houses, and damaged wooden houses. Of the 20 returnee households of returnees, 50% are living in good condition mudbrick houses, 25% are living in damaged mudbrick houses, and 25% are living in good condition concrete houses. The conditions of the houses and damage is due to a lack of maintenance.⁸ No Shelter Cluster partners have reported conducting any household assessments in Ichim. During the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the Shelter Cluster ranked the village as having shelter severity 2 having minor inadequacies.⁹

The climate of Oku is characterized by two main seasons including a dry season and a rainy season that stretches from mid-March to October. The dry season is characterized by its extreme variability in temperatures.¹⁰ The soil in Oku is characterized as being extrusive volcanic¹¹, and has the potential to be suitable for agriculture, but the Elak-Oku council has reported that due to the hilly terrain and poor agricultural techniques that the soil is losing its fertility.¹² Mount Oku, the second highest peak in West Africa stands at 3010 m above sea level, approximately 12 km from Ichim.¹³ The demarcation of protected areas around the forest areas surrounding the mountain has been a challenge, and the population depends on its many resources for their livelihoods. The Kilum-Ijim Forest community forest has many bird, reptile, and rodent species that are at risk of extinction due to the exploitation of the many resources found in the forest. Burning of forest area, poaching of wild animals, and bee-keeping have gradually contributed to the forest's degradation.¹⁴ The council

¹ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

² http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

³ Landsat Imagery Oakridge Laboratory; ECHO Human Settlements Layer

⁴ OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment

⁵ OCHA MSNA

⁶ ACLED 2022-23

⁷ OCHA MSNA

⁸ OCHA MSNA

⁹ Shelter Cluster

¹⁰ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

¹¹ Surficial Lithology of Africa

¹² http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

¹³ Gaia GPS, Google Earth measurements

¹⁴ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

of Elak-Oku has been working on a plan to improve the demarcation of sacred forest areas to protect the forests. The Subdivision also has wetland areas which serve as agricultural lands during the dry season.¹⁵ Houses have been built up sporadically at various elevations across the village.¹⁶ Ichim villages slopes are said to be among the steepest ranging anywhere from 6-25% gradient.¹⁷ It has been reported that due to proper agricultural techniques, landslides are a common risk factor for those who cultivate crops on these steep slopes.¹⁸ A study of Oku Subdivision revealed that between 1982-2018, the major causes of human induced mortality were extreme weather (47% of cases), landslides (22%), conflicts (21%), and inaccessible healthcare (21%).¹⁹

Ichim is not near any natural bodies of water, and Lake Oku is 12 km away from the village.²⁰ Water is available through a series of installed tap stands throughout the village.²¹ For the crisis affected population; however, key informants reported that their main source of drinking water is surface water collected from creeks located 16-30 minutes from where they are living. It is reported that this is due to the fact that water point tap standards are not functioning. Many IDPs and returnees also lack water containers to transport the water to their shelter.²² The type of sanitation used by the population are reported to be latrines with or without slabs and bucket toilets. The population has complained that there are not enough toilets and that latrines are dangerous and unhygienic.²³ There is no waste management infrastructure in Ichim, and there is a need for sensitization at the household level to improve waste management practices.²⁴

There is a market at Ichim, which the authorities reported as lacking proper market infrastructure in 2012²⁵, but that according to key informants in August 2022, the market was damaged heavily and that the market is an unsafe location for the crisis affected people to go.²⁶ It is also reported that prices in the market are too high and that it is difficult to access. The common cooking fuels sold in the market include wood and sawdust.²⁷ Employment opportunities for IDPs and returnees include farming, daily labour, and unemployment. Food is acquired through purchasing with cash, begging for food, and exchanging labour for food. Common coping mechanisms of the population have been reported as relying on cheaper food, reducing consumption and meals per day for a child, spending one's savings, and selling assets.²⁸

No humanitarian assistance has been reported recently in Ichim.²⁹

¹⁵ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

¹⁶ Google Earth Imagery: Imagery date: 11/26/2017

¹⁷ WFP Elevation Layer: Raster Analysis to Slope

¹⁸ Bailack Kevin Mbuh, and Lawrence F. Fombe. (2020). "HUMAN-INDUCED MORTALITY INCIDENCE ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OKU SUBDIVISION, NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON." International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah, 8(4), 32-46. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v8.i4.2020.5>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Open Street Map

²¹ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

²² OCHA MSNA

²³ OCHA MSNA

²⁴ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

²⁵ http://www.pndp.org/documents/26_CDP_Elak_Oku.pdf

²⁶ OCHA MSNA

²⁷ OCHA MSNA

²⁸ OCHA MSNA

²⁹ Shelter Cluster/OCHA MSNA