

## SHELTER and NFI SECTOR

### Humanitarian Needs Overview

#### People in Need: 1,8 million

##### Overall

*“Increasingly viewed as a commodity, housing is most importantly a human right.”<sup>1</sup>*

**In Cameroon a total of 1,813,757 people needs adequate shelter and household items.**

**Approximately 830,000 of them are in the Far North region** where a surge in inter-communal violence in mid-2021 and continuous attacks at the Nigerian border contributed to an increase in displacement. Shelter needs have been further exacerbated by severe-flooding in September 2022 with an exceptional destruction of infrastructures.<sup>2</sup>

**The majority of crisis affected people are hosted by other families or are living in makeshift shelters at informal sites with no access to basic services.**

**Within the North-West and South-West regions, 885,000 people need shelter and household items as violations of human rights continue with the intentional burning of homes, overcrowded shelters with host families and people living in inadequate makeshift shelters in the bush.** In the neighboring regions of the Littoral and West, almost 100,000 IDPs need better shelter, as most are either struggling to afford the cost of rent or are living in inadequate shelters with host families who have limited resources.

The Shelter Sector has identified three population groups with shelter needs which differ according to their status of displacement: **823,000 IDPs, 544,500 returnees who have come back to their house of origin prior to displacement, and 446,500 non-displaced persons.** For the first time in Cameroon since the start of the humanitarian response, the non-displaced population group includes not only the host community but also vulnerable populations left behind in damaged shelters such as persons living with disabilities, older people, persons without financial means to move, those without documentation who may have no other choice but to stay in shelters that have been burnt intentionally or damaged during the course of conflict or natural hazards.

Using the OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment (MSNA) as a data source, shelter severities were analyzed at the settlement level according to the type of settlement, the condition of the settlement, the type of tenure arrangements of the IDPs, the types of shelters of IDPs and returnees, the conditions of the shelters, and, if damaged, the cause of damages

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<sup>1</sup> “The human right to adequate housing”, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing#:~:text=Increasingly%20viewed%20as%20a%20commodity,home%20or%20lands%20taken%20away>.

<sup>2</sup> MSNA, IOM, August 2022. In North-West, South-West regions IDPs hosted are the 57% of total IDP population while in the Far North region IDPs hosted are the 56%.

## Far North region

During 2022, people living in the crisis affected Far North region faced many humanitarian challenges. In the departments of Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone et Chari, the continuation of attacks by non-state armed groups and the escalation of inter-communal clashes in Logone Birni at the end of 2021 led to new displacements, returns of the Cameroonian population from Chad during the course of 2022 and therefore additional needs. The effects of natural disasters have a catastrophic impact on the families of displaced people in informal reception sites, often located in risky areas, not suitable for hosting populations. This lack of access to suitable land considerably increases the vulnerability of displaced populations.

The trend shows that the number of IDPs increased by 6% and the number of Returnees decreased by 3%. Moreover, It was observed that while displacements due to floods are pendular and shorter in time, the ones due to physical attacks are much more protracted (DTM, IOM) therefore the need in shelter and Non-Food-Items varies accordingly. The deterioration of the living conditions of displaced people, who most often are forced to suddenly leave their homes, abandoning their goods, properties and livelihoods which are then stolen or destroyed, causes insufficient or lack of access to employment, to basic social services such as health services, education, civil documentation, water supply, energy. The loss of shelter and household items influences the physical and mental well-being of people with greater consequences on children, older people, pregnant/lactating women and people with disabilities.

Host communities are under heavy pressure to welcome and provide hospitality to displaced people. Promiscuity increases within homes and the economic burden of this care substantially affects host populations. This promiscuity increases protection incidents such as domestic tensions, physical/psychological distress, risk of disease and gender-based violence.

In the Far North Shelter is considered the second priority after food.

The results of the MSNA surveys indicate that the majority of IDPs (56%) still live with host families, 33% in spontaneous sites, 11% in rented houses and 1% in collective centers. 33% of IDPs live in informal sites (more than 70 sites have been counted in the region) which are mainly concentrated in Makary and Mora and some among them live in a situation of displacement since more than eight years.

The departments with a greater concentration of returnees are those of Logone and Chari, Mayo-Sava and Lagone and Birni. Among the returnee population 85% live in houses, 9% in apartments and 6% in makeshift shelters.

According to key informants interviewed during the MSNA in August 2022, the main issues affecting the shelter adequacy in the Far North are that the majority of IDPs lives in less than 3.5 m<sup>2</sup> per individual.

20% of displaced households live in a damaged or destroyed shelter in Kousseri, Lagone and Birni, Makari, Kai-Kai, Kolofata, Mayo Moskota. While the percentage increases among those who return home where the 43% live in a damaged or destroyed shelter in Lagone and Birni, Kai-Kai, Maga, Kolofata, Mora, Mayo Moskota.

During the first six months of 2022 an important increase in rent and the price of household items has been reported with a consequent challenge in accessing them. The average price of rent varies from one

department to another. Diamare appears as the department where the price of rent is the highest with 15,531 Fcfa and the Mayo Kani the one where the price of rent is the lowest with 3,000 Fcfa.

The access to House, Land and Properties continues to be reported as problematic especially for women. Access if not addressed in equal/sustained manner then deterioration of social cohesion, misperception of social justice, criminality, violence, stigmatization, isolation, discrimination, eviction, poverty will increase. Among those who occupy without property title, rental contracts, or written permission, most live in traditional brick (48%) or straw (25%) houses that are incomplete or damaged. Securing access to HLP is essential before delivering any type of shelter assistance to these people to not exacerbate further their situation. In the Far North, the most used type of shelter is the traditional one made of mud bricks and straw or corrugated iron roofs.

Among those who are with a host family, the majority live in traditional mud brick shelters in good condition (57%), however in this case the recurring problem is the lack of space and privacy and over time this condition affects the dignity of the individual.

Among those who rent, the majority chooses traditional houses made of brick (55%) or concrete (17%) and in good condition, but for the rest (28%) is traditional houses in straw or apartments that are incomplete or damaged.

The non-displaced people who are not hosting IDPs in the Far North region are all victims of attacks accompanied by arson or different type of damages. Most of them live in officially recognized not damaged villages while the most vulnerable (12%) live in partially destroyed villages with high level of shelter inadequacy and no possibilities to move elsewhere to seek better accommodation mainly due to disabilities or old age.

This population group has not benefitted so far by any type of humanitarian assistance, so it is considered extremely vulnerable. The basic need of shelter and household items must be fulfilled appropriately and timely by the inclusion of all community members in solutions design and when possible, by the integration of their available resources, skills through market-based interventions. If this does not happen, then humanitarian aid dependence, diminishment of human capital, demotivation, additional psychological distress will arise.

The set-up of appropriate mechanisms, through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, address concerns, complaints and apply corrective action is crucial to the humanitarian shelter/non-food items needs overview.

### **North-West and South-West regions**

The destruction of property, including the intentional burning of homes, has contributed to the shelter needs in addition to the coping mechanism to seek out shelter in safer locations from targeted villages. According to the latest OCHA MSNA, the majority of IDPs (57 per cent) are staying with host families, while 27 per cent are renting their accommodation. The majority of IDPs have settled in officially recognized settlements (93 per cent), but 24,500 IDPs are staying in bush or informal settlements, often taking shelter in inadequate makeshift shelters or agricultural infrastructures. 59 villages in the South-West reported having IDPs using agricultural infrastructure as shelter, while 29 villages in the North-

West and South-West reported that IDPs use cocoa ovens for shelter. There are 22 collective shelters in the North-West and South-West regions. These buildings are schools, churches, mosques, and public buildings usually not designed for use as shelters.<sup>3</sup>

As the situation has grown more protracted the number of returnees to the region has slowly increased. Upon their return, 8,200 returnee households found their homes damaged due to conflict, either accidentally or burnt intentionally. Returnees often lack the financial and material resources necessary to conduct repairs and while waiting for their homes to be repaired are forced to also stay with host families in overcrowded conditions. The Shelter Cluster has identified that needs of non-displaced include hosts who have inadequate shelter due to overcrowding and who lack resources and NFIs due to their use by multiple members in one household and also those who are staying in shelters damaged by the conflict. Due to limited mobility, older people and persons living with disabilities are often left behind when villages are attacked. The Shelter Cluster estimates that 112,000 people are still living in homes that were burnt intentionally since the start of the crisis. 37 per cent of non-displaced household members have difficulties to walk or climb downstairs in the North-West Region, while 24 per cent of non-displaced household members have difficulties to walk or climb downstairs in the South-West region. 12% of these households are found to be elderly. In further evidence to this, as of October 2022, Cluster partners have documented 648 houses in Mezam, Momo, Boyo, Bui, and Menchum divisions of the North-West region.

The Shelter Cluster has identified Donga Mantung and Menchum in the North-West and Kupé-Manengumba in the South-West as the divisions with the most extreme shelter inadequacies (severity level 5), including makeshift shelters in bush settlements, where many are seeking protection from the threat of hostilities and conscription by armed groups. In the absence of being able to find materials for shelters, these IDPs also resort to agricultural infrastructures or cocoa ovens to have a simple roof over their heads. In host families, overcrowding and lack of privacy create the risk of gender-based violence where some family members are forced to sleep outside or on the floor at night exposing them to the risk of malaria and other diseases. According to data collected by the Shelter Cluster<sup>45</sup>, the majority (60 per cent) of those impacted by extreme inadequacies are IDPs. These IDP households also rely on makeshift shelters and collective shelters and in extreme cases have no shelter. 59 per cent of IDP, returnee, and non-displaced households found to have extreme inadequacies have been damaged with the majority of them in the North-West. In terms of common tenure types for those in extreme inadequacies, 34 per cent of these households are renting with a formal agreement. 47 per cent of these households pay over 40 per cent of their income on renting their current shelter. 18 per cent of households found to have extreme inadequacies are hosted for free by a host family. 22 per cent of extremely inadequate households are facing a risk of eviction. These households lack essential household items and have to rely on inferior sources of energy with 100% of extremely inadequate households using wood for their source of cooking fuel, while at night lighting sources are coming from flashlights (23%), candles (23%), solar lamps (17%), and bush lamps (11%) 49% of these households

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<sup>3</sup> <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/documents/shelter-typologies-and-needs-overview-camerouns-northwest-southwest>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/pages/shelter-cluster-household-assessment-northwest-and-southwest-regions>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/documents/assessing-shelter-vulnerability-and-severity-household-needs>

report rarely having lighting at night, 30% report never having lighting at night, and 21% report they have occasionally light at night.

Around 43 per cent of households were found to have severe inadequacies (severity level 4). 39 per cent of these household are internally displaced; 33 per cent are non-displaced, and 27 per cent are returnees. In urban areas of the Mezam and Fako divisions, affordability and poor shelter conditions threaten good access to housing. According to recent data collected by Shelter Cluster partners<sup>6</sup>, 80 per cent of households surveyed in Bamenda, Buea, Limbe, and West Coast were paying 30 per cent or more of their income on rent.

In the North-West region, it was found that 50 per cent of IDP households have three or more people per room while in the South-West region this is at 67 per cent of households. 33 per cent of the returnee households are having three or more people per room in the North-West, while 25 per cent of returnee households have three or more people per room in the South-West. Lack of essential household items is also a critical driver of shelter inadequacy. In addition to overcrowding, Shelter Cluster partners have found that larger families are sometimes forced to share mosquito nets and mattresses and that there are often not enough sleeping places. 16 per cent of IDP household members are sleeping on the floor in the North-West, while 39 per cent of household members sleep on the floor in the South-West. This lack of NFIs, such as mattresses and mosquito nets, is not limited to IDPs, but it was also noted that amongst returnees. 8 per cent of returnee household members sleep on the floor in the North-West and 17 per cent of returnee household members sleep on the floor in the South-West. 2 per cent of households reported that they are forced to sleep outside at night. In addition to needs for better sleeping conditions and to mitigate the risks of GBV through shelter and mattress and blanket distribution, other NFI needs include access to cooking utensils and fuel, improved lighting to improve sense of safety, and tools for carrying water and improving one's shelter<sup>7</sup>.

#### West and Littoral regions

99,000 IDPs are found to need shelter/NFI support in the Littoral and West regions. The Bamboutos, Ndé, Nkam, and Mounjo divisions were found to be in severity phase 4 of severe inadequacies while the remainder of the divisions are in severity phase 3. The majority of IDPs in these regions (over 18,000 households) are renting their accommodation, while around 12,000 households are staying with host families. In extreme cases, IDPs don't have the permission of the landlord to stay in their shelters (1,400 households) and over 720 households stay in makeshift shelters. There are 24 collective shelters in the Littoral and West regions.

Over 52,000 IDPs are in need of Shelter in the West Region. According to data collected by the Shelter Cluster, 53 per cent of IDP households have three or more people per room due to overcrowding in both

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<sup>6</sup> UNHCR and Caritas HH assessment with Shelter Cluster Standardized Household Needs Assessment Form in Bamenda, 1, 3, 4, and Fako Division, presented in Shelter Cluster meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November- detailed results available upon request of Shelter Cluster Coordinator <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/news/november-2nd-nwsw-shelter-cluster-monthly-meeting>

<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that the NFI needs are the following for each population group: 121,165 IDPs need NFIs in the North-West region; 62,063 IDPs need NFIs in the South-West region; 145,213 returnees need NFIs in the North-West region; 95,309 returnees need NFIs in the South-West region; 38,015 non-displaced people need NFIs in both regions.

host and rental type accommodation arrangements. Around 29 per cent of IDPs households in the West region are informally renting their accommodation. Out of the 28 per cent of IDP household members which report sleeping on the floor, 10 per cent of these household members report sleeping outside due to overcrowding and lack of adequate sleeping materials. Over 70 per cent of IDPs say that money would help them improve their current shelters. According to data from the OCHA MSNA, key informants also remarked that the poor shelter conditions were exacerbating protection risks. While 42 per cent of key informants in the West region reported that IDP women and girls don't have enough privacy at home, 20 per cent of key informants reported that IDP women and girls don't feel that their home is secured. Over 31,000 IDPs are in need of NFIs in the West region.

In the Littoral Region, there are almost 47,000 people in need of shelter assistance and 28,000 IDPs in need of NFIs. In 226 villages it was reported that IDPs are staying in timber and wood shelters in good condition, while in 111 villages it was reported that IDPs are staying in unfinished wood houses, and in 132 villages it was reported that IDPs are in damaged wood houses. In 185 villages it is reported that IDPs are in concrete/cement houses. Apartments, makeshift shelter, agricultural infrastructure, and cocoa ovens were also reported as shelter types. Key informants in 47% of the villages reported that IDP women and girls don't have enough privacy at home, and 19 per cent of key informants reported that IDP women and girls don't feel that their home is secure.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> MSNA, Littoral and West, OCHA, August 2022.