

Rapid Protection Assessment, January 2018: South West Cameroon (3)

Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
Scope.....	2
Methodology	2
Limitations.....	3
KEY FINDINGS	3
Security.....	4
Basic services	6
Documentation	7
Freedom of movement	9
Housing, land and property.....	9
Host community tensions	10
Support from NGOs	10
Durable solutions: intentions	11
CONCLUSION	11
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS	11

DRC carried out Rapid Protection Assessments in November/December 2018 in Buea and areas South of Buea (Mutengene, Tiko, Limbe), reporting findings at cluster level in the South West and nationally. Following this, DRC attempted to expand access North along the Buea-Ekona road with the strategy of developing community acceptance at each stop, rather than leapfrogging between communities, in order to allow community leaders to communicate internally and verify the position of DRC on humanitarian principles. Using this framework for both scoping missions and preliminary assessments, DRC carried out activities in the following locations: Liongo village, Malale village and Ekona Yard. Ekona town was found to be largely deserted with many displaced persons now in the previously mentioned locations. Indeed, DRC's access strategy aims to gain acceptance from communities and its leaders through which unrestricted access within the area of program implementation can be guaranteed. Visibility (frequent field visits) and humanitarian principles are essential components of the access strategy that aims to improve DRC's understanding of the current context in which the organization operates mainly in often overlooked hard-to-reach areas.

Scope

The assessment was designed to gather community level data in order to better ascertain key protection risks faced by those who were displaced, returned or hosting displaced communities in the South West region. Following a brief review of limited secondary data, a series of protection concerns were recognized as most likely to be identified in targeted communities such as protection of civilians, securitization of civilian areas, movement restrictions and loss of documentation. On the basis of this review, a questionnaire was developed and teams carried out assessments between January 8 and January 18, 2019. A total of 21 key informants (9 male, 12 female) were interviewed across Buea and Muyuka sub-divisions all located within the Fako Division of the South West.

Methodology

Key informant interviews were conducted in person using a set questionnaire involving both open and closed questions. This methodology was chosen to avoid any grouping of individuals that might cause safety concerns for participants and to allow for maximum possible comfort in discussions over sensitive information. Where necessary, codes were used to identify particularly sensitive options such as labelling of perpetrators. Key informants were chosen based on their technical specialties, such as teachers' knowledge of the education system, or area specific knowledge, such as community leaders. A mix of ages and genders made up the total number of key informants with more female than male KIs in total and an average KI age of 48. Assessors primarily used mobile data collection techniques through SurveyCTO although in a few cases, hard copy assessment forms were preferred.

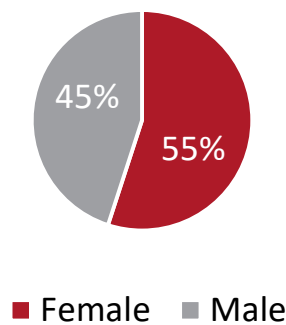
While participants were given the options of both ‘don’t know’ and ‘don’t want to say’, in some cases they did not feel comfortable to give either answer. Assessors were trained on how to approach community members and in how to explain the activities of the Danish Refugee Council. However, the humanitarian crisis in the South West is fairly recent and the presence of INGOs very limited, meaning community members could have misunderstood the purpose of the assessment or their participation. In one case, DRC staff members were only able to visit the location for a limited time period before being warned that the security situation had deteriorated and the area was no longer safe. Due to the presence of non-state armed groups in the area, key informants may not have felt free to discuss all questions despite the best efforts of DRC teams to explain and implement strict confidentiality.

Key findings

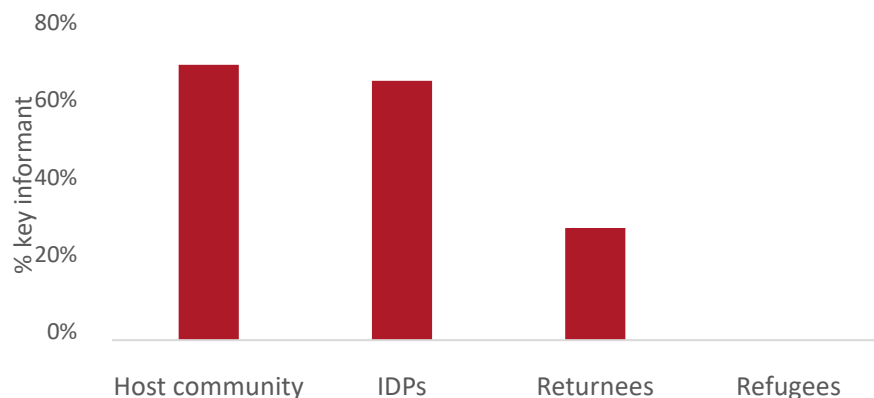
In each chart, the percentage of key informants (KIs) is detailed on one axis from a total of 21 with the data collected on the other.

Key Informants:

1.1- Percentage and count of key informants gender



1.2- Percentage of groups reported per site by key informants

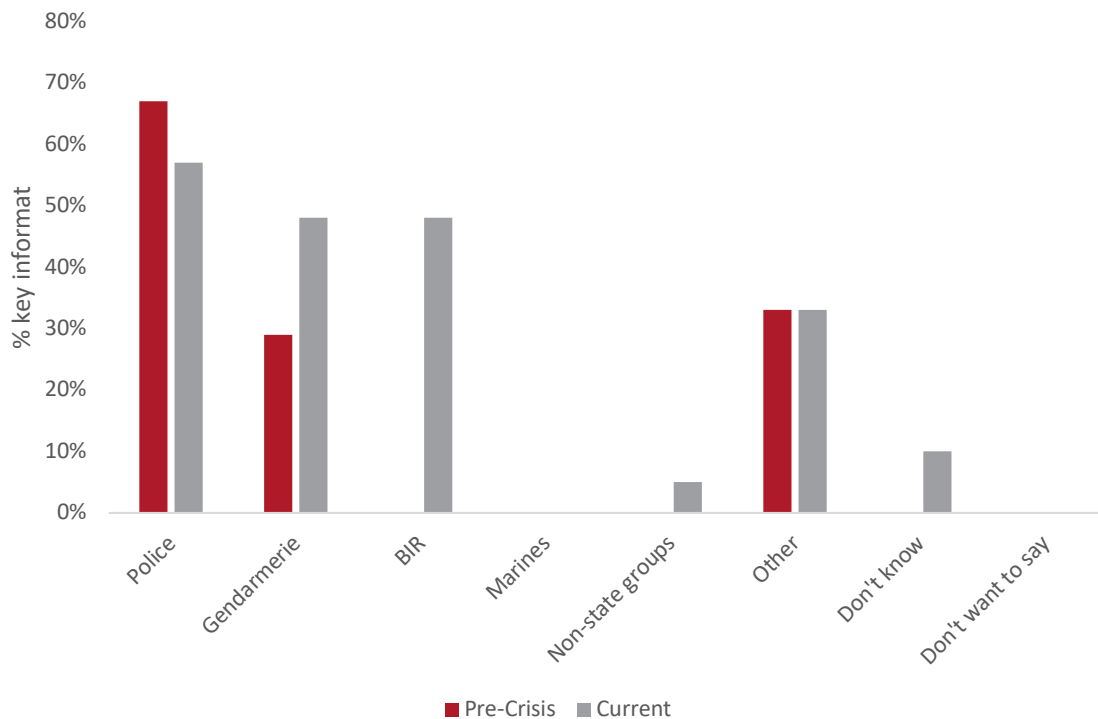


Most Key Informants reported a mix of host community, IDP and returnees at their location. In some cases, this was supported by informal interviews with community leaders, who detailed how they had been providing assistance to those moving in and out of their villages.

Security

2.1- Percentage of KIs reporting presence of security actors post-crisis

2.2- Percentage of armed groups reported by key informants– pre-crisis



The biggest reported increase of security forces since the crisis came from the BIR, with KIs also detailing an increase in Gendarmerie presence. This coincided with a reported decrease in civilian security forces (police), which is in line with the move from peacetime security to non-international armed conflict and the militarization of areas where non-state armed groups may be located. In this case, “other” referred to either local vigilante groups developed to defend villages or no security actors at all.

2.3- Types of insecurity in the current location reported by key informant

Theft	100%
Physical assault	69%
Abductions/disappearances	54%
Threats	69%
Armed conflict	54%
Don't know	0%
Don't want to say	0%

43% of Key Informants interviewed reported that there were incidents of insecurity in their area of the Buea-Ekona road. Of those who reported insecurity, all stated that thefts happened (100%), while over half (54%) reported both abductions/disappearances and armed conflict.

This reflects a very high level of insecurity in this area with a lack of distinction between civilians and combatants (hence abductions) as well as a high risk of psychosocial distress for the affected population.

2.4- Percentage of presence of non-state armed groups reported by key informant

Yes, often	14%
Yes, sometimes	48%
No, never	29%
Don't know	10%
Don't want to say	0%

The high levels of insecurity correlated strongly with the increased presence of non-state armed groups in the area with nearly half of KIs reporting that they 'sometimes' passed through, compared to 29% in Tiko and only 7% in Limbe. The discrepancy between responses of groups 'often' passing through where other KIs only reported their presence 'sometimes' reflects the different locations (Liongo, Malale, Ekona Yard) of those interviewed. A further breakdown cannot be published without putting KIs at risk.

2.5- Percentage of hazards experienced by individuals reported by key informant

Discrimination against certain groups	10%
Threats	38%
Physical violence	29%
Arbitrary arrests	43%
Abductions/disappearances	43%
Arbitrary executions/murder	24%
Forced recruitment into armed groups	0%
Don't know	29%
Don't want to say	0%

Key Informants on the Buea-Ekona road reported threats, discrimination, physical violence and arbitrary arrests at relatively similar levels to their peers further South of Buea. The major discrepancy between areas South and North of Buea were in the categories of abductions/disappearances (43% of KIs reporting this North compared to 7 and 10% in Limbe and Tiko respectively) and for arbitrary executions/murder (24% North compared to 4 and 5% in Limbe and Tiko respectively). This again demonstrates the intense levels of violence and insecurity experienced by civilian populations in this area of the Buea-Ekona road.

2.6- Percentage of reported perpetrators by key informant

Police	57%
Gendarmerie	57%
BIR	48%
Military/marines	33%
Armed groups	0%
Civilian/criminals	10%
Don't know	33%
Don't want to say	0%

Interestingly, despite the reported presence of non-state armed actors, no KIs reported them as perpetrators of hazards against the population. This is likely to reflect both the violence on both sides of the conflict (state and non-state) as well as the fear among the civilian population of possible retaliation for their reporting. The highest percentage of reported perpetrators were split equally between the police and gendarmerie despite a reported decrease in the presence in police. Again, this may reflect both the reality of the situation and the political affiliations of those interviewed.

Basic services

3.1/2- Percentage of primary schools available by key informant, pre and post crisis

Primary school availability	
Pre-crisis	100%
Current	14%

The huge discrepancy between current access to primary school education and pre-crisis access is much more stark than in areas South of Buea, where a greater percentage of KIs reported the current presence of functioning primary schools (e.g. Limbe: 86%, Tiko: 95%). This correlates with the informally reported presence of armed groups and the directive by certain factions that education should be treated as a form of marginalization by national Francophone authorities and banned in its current form. This is reinforced by KI responses to the question of why primary schools are no longer available. In this instance 61% of KIs reported that 'people are scared to use state services', with 28% also reporting that schools are now 'damaged/abandoned'.

3.3/4- Percentage of health clinics available by key informant, pre and post crisis

	Pre-Crisis	Current
Yes	71%	10%
No	29%	90%

While there has been no comparable directive from non-state actors over accessing health services to that of accessing schools, there was also a marked drop in health service accessibility from pre-crisis levels, according to key informants. This was also much greater than in locations South of Buea (e.g. Limbe: 86% of KIs reporting current health access, Tiko: 76% of KIs reporting current health access). However, on the Buea-Ekona road, only 5% of KIs reported that a lack of health access was due to fear of state services. Those interviewed were more likely to blame a lack of staff (26%) or the building being damaged or abandoned (32%).

3.5 – Percentage of market availability by key informant

	Pre-Crisis	Current
Yes	38%	10%
No	62%	90%

In addition to the reported lack of market availability, when asked as part of the questionnaire, KIs also stated that no street vendors existed (58% of KIs), meaning little to no availability of food items other than those grown. This correlates to high levels of reported restrictions on movement (5.1), where freedom of movement would allow for the sourcing of alternative markets e.g. in Buea town.

Documentation

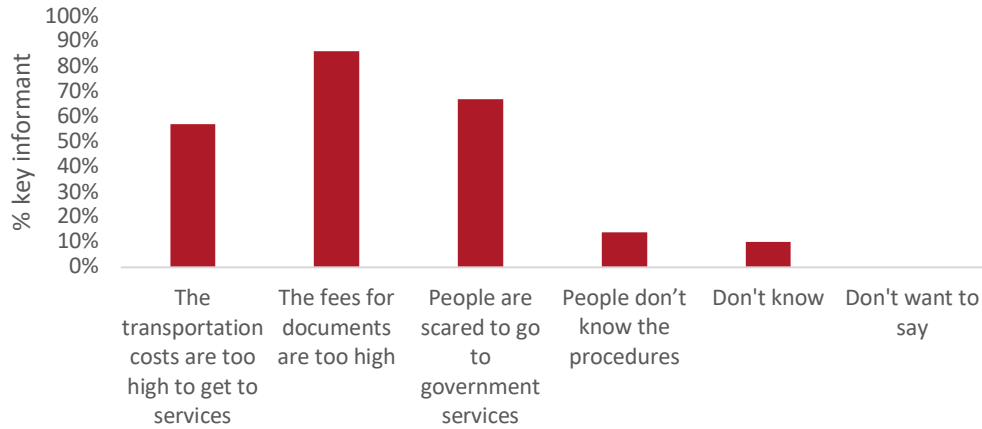
4.1/2 – Percentage of availability of birth and land and property documents by key informant

	Birth registration documents	Property or land ownership documents
They are widespread	62%	24%
It's about half and half	19%	0%
Only a limited number of people have them	5%	10%
Very few people have them	14%	67%
Don't know	0%	0%
Don't want to say	0%	0%

While a relatively high percentage of KIs reported that birth registration documents were widespread, this was not the case for property documentation, which implies that those displaced individuals risk loss of land and assets on their return. This is supported by the registration of

individual cases in the same areas where displaced persons reported that their properties had been looted or burned with impunity.

4.3 - Percentage of barriers to documentation access reported by key informants



Document fees was the most prevalent reason reported by KIs as barriers to accessing civil documentation. However, a relatively high percentage of KIs also stated that fear of state services hindered access. In Tiko and Limbe, KIs stated that transportation costs were more of an obstacle, correlating with the more limited presence of non-state armed actors.

4.4- Percentages of risks of not having documentation reported by key informants

Restrictions on freedom of movement	57%
Harassment by security forces	95%
Barriers to accessing services	43%
Barriers in accessing land and property	14%
Don't know	5%
Don't want to say	0%

While 70% of KIs South of Buea reported harassment by security forces as a risk for those without documentation, this was nearly all of those North of Buea (95% of KIs). This is combined with secondary data from high numbers of registered cases who lack ID and report anecdotal incidences of verbal and physical intimidation and checkpoints, leading to restricted movement.

Freedom of movement

5.1- Percentage of barriers to freedom of movement for IDPs reported by key informants

Lack of documentation	81%
State run checkpoints	76%
Armed group checkpoints	14%
Direct armed conflict	24%
Risk of forced recruitment	5%
Risk of sexual harassment or sexual exploitation	19%
Curfews	38%
Natural hazards e.g. landslides, flooding etc.	0%
Don't know	0%
Don't want to say	0%

In line with the overall analysis of the situation North of Buea, an increase in the presence of non-state armed actors correlates with greater reported direct armed conflict (24% of KIs North compared with 7 and 5% in Limbe and Tiko), armed group checkpoints (14% compared with 0 and 5%) and state-run checkpoints (76% compared with 33% and 19% in Limbe Tiko respectively).

Housing, land and property

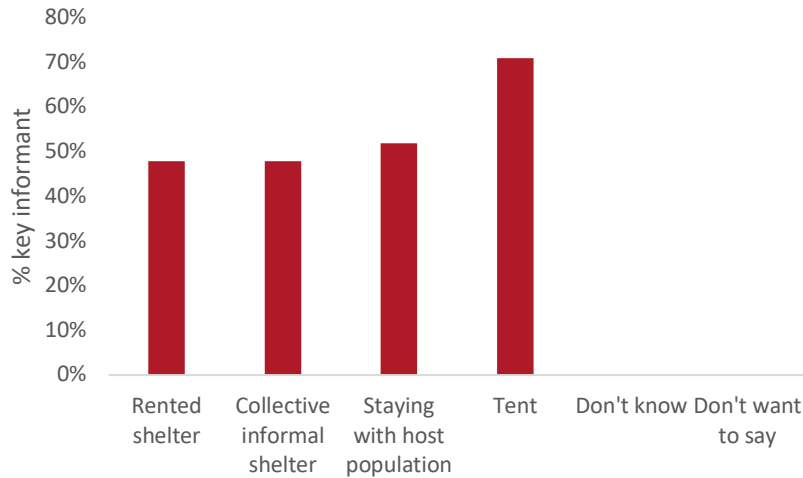
6.1-Percentage hazards related to property reported by key informants

Theft or confiscation of properties	29%
Robbery or banditry on the roads	38%
Land occupied by armed groups or armed forces	5%
Reduced land available because of conflict	0%
Destruction of properties	38%
Don't know	33%
Don't want to say	0%

Key Informants North of the Buea road reported similar levels of property theft and banditry to those South of Buea. The major discrepancy was reported in the destruction of property with over a third of KIs on the Buea-Ekona road stating that property destruction took place (38%), compared with 0% in Limbe and 5% in Tiko. KIs stated that the BIR, police, gendarmerie and military were all responsible for such actions.

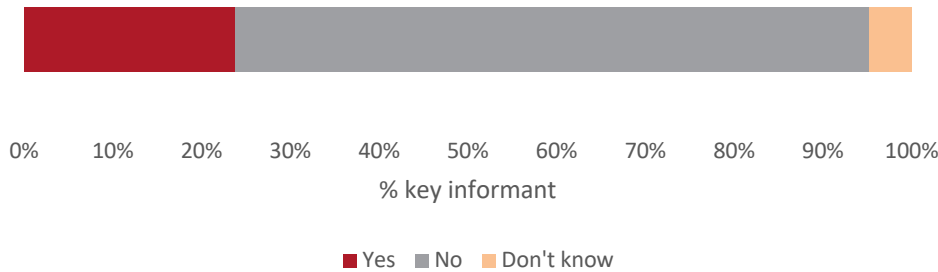
Unlike South of Buea, of those interviewed on the Buea-Ekona road, 71% reported most IDPs were living in tents, which correlates with anecdotal reports of displaced populations in 'the bush' or without any form of concrete shelter.

6.2- Percentage of shelter types reported by key informant



Host community tensions

7.1- Percentage of key informants reporting tension between host community and IDP groups



There was a much higher degree of acceptance between host communities and IDPs on the Buea-Ekona road than those South of Buea with 71% of KIs reporting no tensions between the two, compared with 80% of KIs in Tiko reporting tensions and 55% in Limbe. Given the lack of rental arrangements for displaced individuals, this did not come up as a point of tension, unlike in the South. KIs did not give a sufficient breakdown of the reasons behind tensions to merit inclusion.

Support from NGOs

A greater percentage of KIs reported support from NGOs (29%): the highest of any of DRC's previous assessment locations (11% in Limbe, 5% in Tiko). However, this may also reflect expanded access and increased overall humanitarian presence within the timeframe.

Durable solutions: intentions

Most KIs reported that IDPs did wish to return (71%), which correlates with previous assessments. However, only a very limited number of KIs chose to report the reasons why IDPs did not want to return, making the data statistically insignificant.

Conclusion

Levels of violence and insecurity are clearly at a very high-level North of Buea and considerably worse on the indication of hazards against individuals, militarization and restrictions on movement. The move from civilian security (police) to militarized security (military, BIR etc.) is stark and the effects on the local population have radically increased vulnerability. While Key Informants largely blamed state forces for threats against civilians, this must be read within the context of the area, where locations are, at least sporadically, under non-state armed group control, making retaliation a serious concern. Most troubling is the levels of both abductions and executions that appear to be taking place, despite the relative calm of Buea town and their close proximity. As with areas South of Buea, a lack of documentation creates a severe hindrance on free movement. This, combined with the almost total loss of access to basic services, creates very high level of vulnerability among both host and displaced populations. Shelter arrangements are considerably worse than those South of Buea, with many families living in tents and while tensions are inter-communal tensions are currently reported as low, this could change with an influx of humanitarian actors or a worsening of insecurity.

Recommendations for further analysis

- There were discrepancies between the responses of KIs reporting the presence of armed groups in their areas. While it is not possible to give a further breakdown in this report without putting those interviewed at risk, further assessments over a broader area could allow for greater analysis without providing detailed location names or placing respondents at risk.
- In addition to the reported lack of market availability KIs also stated that there were high levels of reported restrictions on movement. This may indicate that markets that were previously available have now been blocked but warrants further investigation to establish causal links.
- Key Informants reported birth registration documentation as relatively widespread but this does not correlate with anecdotal reports of women giving birth in 'the bush' and unable to access birth registration due to the conflict. Further discussions at community level may develop a greater understanding of this issue and the barriers to access that new mothers face.
- Most KIs reported that IDPs did wish to return (71%), which correlates with previous assessments. However, only a very limited number of KIs chose to report the reasons why IDPs did not want to return, making the data statistically insignificant. Increased interviews would give a greater sample, allowing for analysis of the reasoning behind IDPs choosing to stay on in their areas of displacement.