



NascentSolutions
Partnering with the poor



Situation of Humanitarian Assistance in the Far-North Region of Cameroon



Focus group discussion with men

Executive Summary

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Introduction

The year 2019 in the Far North region has seen a sharp upsurge in violence, leaving the populations with an uncertain future. Ongoing hostilities have displaced 527,000 people (112,000 refugees, 297,000 IDPs and 117,000 returnees) and continue to steadily push more people to flee their villages. The number of IDPs increased from 228,000 in October 2018 to 271,000 in August 2019 and to 297,000 in December 2019 UNICEF (2019).

Goal

This study aimed at contributing to the lifesaving and well-being of vulnerable population of the Far North region of Cameroon, by promoting access to quality, safe, relevant and sustainable responses, within the framework of Nascent Solutions' fields of competence, namely, humanitarian assistance and its key components of WASH, food security and nutrition, shelter, health, and civil protection.

Objective

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the current demographics, vulnerabilities, coping strategies, knowledge, attitudes, and practices among the IDPs and non-camp refugee people who could benefit from improved services in humanitarian and resilience sectors the Far North Region of Cameroon.

Methodology

The research consisted of individual and group interviews at the central, regional and division levels, coupled with review of documents and analysis of relevant data obtained during the interviews. It covers three sectors, namely, health, education and agriculture. In consultation with Nascent Solutions, the divisions of Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga were selected for the study. The key informants and groups were selected from the central, regional and divisional levels. Training for data collection, including a pre-test and finalization of the interview guides, took place on August 17-18 in Maroua. Interviews were recorded, and synthesized in a form (in MS Word) whose content is aligned to the interview guide. The syntheses were further analyzed by research question and by key theme, first by sector (health, agriculture, education). In a second phase, the syntheses from the three sectors were combined and triangulated.

Results

Health sector: Most respondents shared their perspectives and perceptions on the humanitarian response. It was clear that so far, UNHCR is championing the humanitarian assistance for refugees in that region, and work in collaboration with other organizations from various clusters like the health, education, agricultural sectors. In the region, the refugees and the internally displaced persons are faced with so many needs that can be summarized into: Financial needs for health care access; need for potable water and clean water for drinking; the need to feed adequately and need for adequate material / equipment and "well trained and specialized personnel" for proper health care services. A few insights into knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) emerged from the interviews, mostly with regard to health; and according to the Ouro-

Tada Catholic Integrated Health Center in Mayo-Sava, the interviewee declared that there is average KAP among affected populations.

Agricultural sector: The climate in the region of the Far North is tropical and Sahelian, and rainfall is relatively small ranging from 400 to 900 mm per annum. The vulnerable groups, estimated at about 300.000 persons, generally suffer especially from malnutrition and hunger. There are humanitarian groups providing assistance but much is still needed to cover all the vulnerable groups since some of the vulnerable groups do not receive any attention from any humanitarian group. Several needs were identified among which, the need for training and education that came up as a major one. To solve many of these challenges, at the Central, the Ministry of Agriculture thought that, there are a lot of unmet needs. This includes for example, education to help change the mindset of the vulnerable groups. Educate the people about climate change and climate variability; creating income-generating activities may be good using short-cycle species like poultry, because they can enable the producers to make profit in the short term.

Education sector: As one would expect, the issue of insufficient teachers was raised by almost all categories of participants, one of the reasons being that most teachers have fled without returning and as such, teaching cannot take place effectively. More generally, inadequate infrastructure was cited frequently, including with focus on people with disabilities or with specific needs. Finally, hunger was reported as a barrier to education. At all levels, capacity building for teachers was identified as a major need in the Far North region. Indeed, many of the teachers need capacity for education in emergencies as well as inclusive education. Training modules for education in emergencies was also view as an important need; that is why the interviewee from the regional delegation of Education insisted on the need to develop training modules for education in emergencies, in order to equip teachers to be effective in various crisis situations.

Conclusion

Many organizations are assisting IDPs and refugees in the Far North region, and some of the respondents at the regional levels have shown some degree of satisfaction. However, there remain many unmet needs that require a collaboration between partners and government institutions to address. In the health sector, the following areas emerged as priority to consider: emergency obstetric and neonatal care, family planning, adolescents and youths' health services, and gender-based violence. Agriculture can be viewed as the backbone to relieve these vulnerable groups. The vulnerable groups need appropriate inputs especially land, capital and know-how. The processes of crop and animal production rely greatly on the timeliness of carrying out the operations of plant and animal husbandry, nutrition, pest control and veterinary services. These inputs and processes will yield satisfactory outputs and improve the livelihood of the vulnerable groups.

Recommendations: Potential interventions

• Health sector

Security: Identification of children and adult IDPs and refugees ensures them demographic information in the health care process.

Infrastructure: In order to improve on the use of health facilities or improve access to health care services, the government should create health facilities nearer vulnerable populations and or fix the road leading to these health facilities.

Nutrition: NGOs should consider the provision of enough foods to the needy populations, through food supply chain for a start, then an established system of food cropping.

Health workers: The government should train specialized and employ more health care professionals for improved health care services.

Geographic access to health care: In order to improve access to health care and health information, the government should build bridges that can enable these vulnerable populations to cross and get to the health facilities even during raining seasons.

Financial aid: For continuous support to the IDPs and refugees, the government and NGO should consider putting in place a health insurance system or health funds just for the vulnerable and needy for better health access, especially pregnant women.

Service delivery: NGOs and the government should work to promote malaria prevention and control practices, through the distribution of mosquito nets and free therapy for children and pregnant women

• Agriculture sector

Training: There are a lot of unmet needs, including education to help change the mindset of the vulnerable groups, on topics including climate change and climate variability.

Inputs and techniques: Search for adapted varieties to cope with climate change and training to make the farmers to be aware that poor sowing leads to loss of production.

Commercialization and entrepreneurship: Create income-generating activities may be good using short-cycle species like poultry, because they can enable the producers to make profit in the short term.

Insecurity: Due to nostalgia for their homeland, efforts should be made to calm down the crisis so that they can return to their various homelands.

• Education sector

Capacity building and curriculum modification: Training sessions to be organized for teachers to build specific skills. School curriculum to be modified in order for it to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom and that it will serve as a motivation for the internally displaced learners. The following modules should be created: a) Educational modules for building the specific capacity for parents in order for them to collaborate with those providing education; b)

Leadership modules for all educational stakeholders to manage education in crisis; c) Modules for Psychosocial rehabilitation; d) Modules for inclusive/special educational practices.

Provision of qualified teachers and infrastructural development: Schools should be equipped with qualified teachers in commensurate numbers, technology, and other vital requirements so as to ensure the adequate and proper development of every learner with knowledge, attitudes and skills. Modern infrastructures to be constructed and equipped to ensure children learn adequately.

Creation of counseling and rehabilitation centers: Government and related partner organizations should create counseling and rehabilitation centers for traumatized and emotionally disturbed children.