



NOTE

This is an excerpt from IDMC's 2019 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).

SPOTLIGHT

CAMEROON

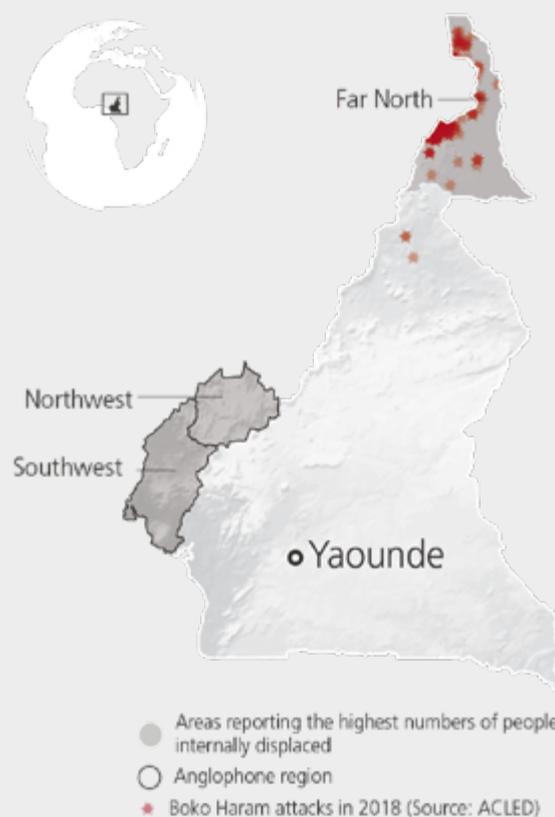
A deepening but neglected crisis

Boko Haram's regional insurgency continued to cause displacement in Cameroon in 2018, but events in the Far North region were all but eclipsed by an internal conflict that erupted in the Northwest and Southwest regions, home to the country's anglophone minority. A protest movement that began in 2016 escalated into fighting between armed separatists and the country's military, triggering around 437,000 new displacements during the year. Another 30,000 people fled across the border into Nigeria.

The Northwest and Southwest regions, with a population of four million people, have long been marginalised and have experienced occasional outbreaks of violence as the government suppressed protests. The latest violence has its roots in a strike declared by lawyers' and teachers' trade unions over the government's efforts to impose French on the two sectors. Cameroon's security forces launched a violent crackdown on protests in support of the strike, and numerous anglophone activists were arrested, including 47 in Nigeria.

This repression in turn led elements of the opposition to take up arms, and separatist groups calling for an independent Ambazonia Republic have engaged in armed confrontation with the military since January 2018. The government has responded with full-blown counterinsurgency operations. It has been accused of engaging in extrajudicial executions, excessive use of force, the torture and ill-treatment of suspected separatists and other detainees and the burning of homes and property.⁵⁰

Military operations have been recorded in more than 100 villages in the Southwest and Northwest regions since October 2017.⁵¹ Most if not all of the inhabitants of the villages targeted have fled, and around 80 per cent are thought to have sought refuge in the forest, where they have no access to shelter, water or sanitation.⁵² Meme Division in the Southwest region has borne the brunt of the crisis, producing and hosting the majority of IDPs.



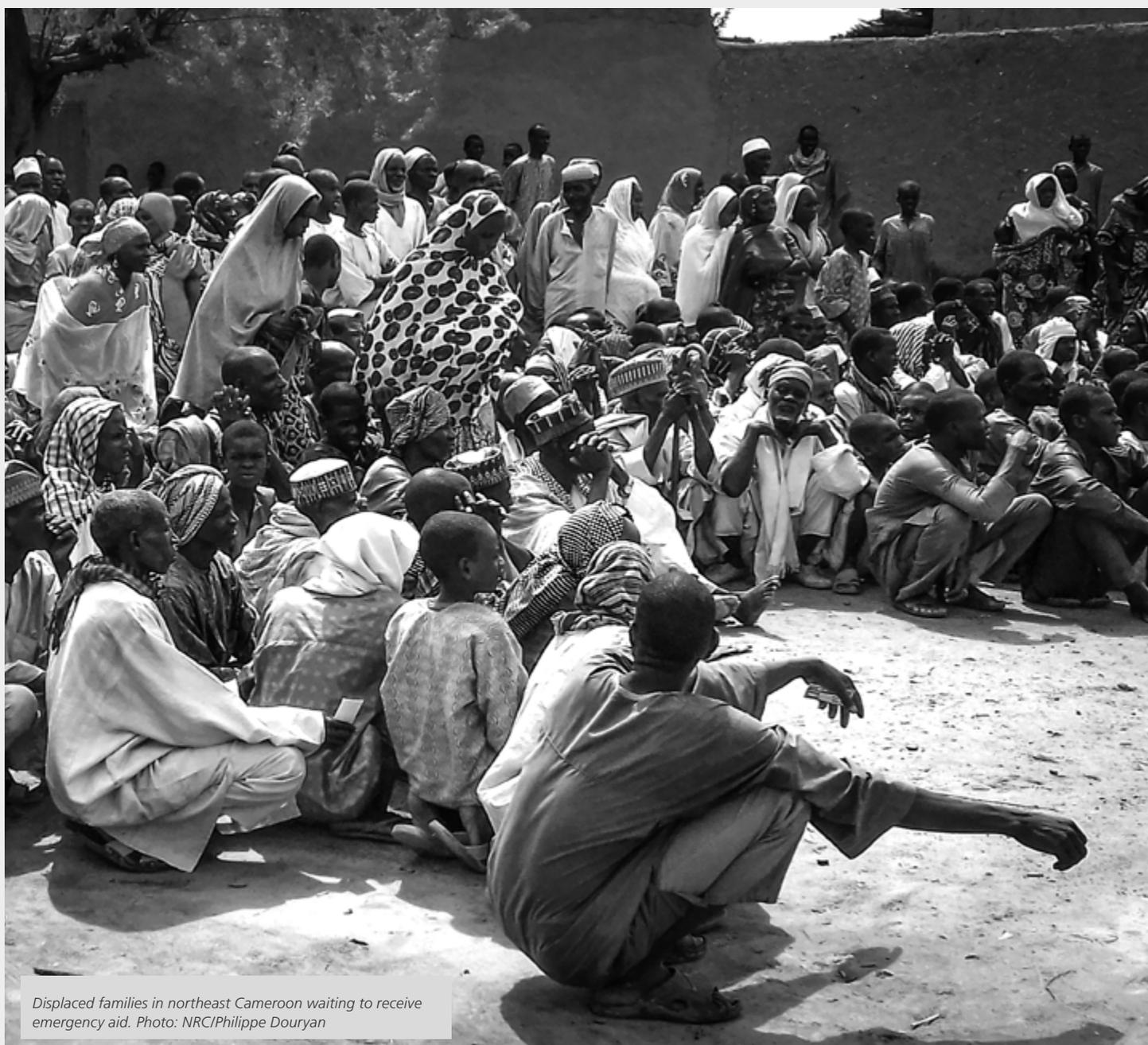
Education has been severely disrupted. Many schools shut down as part of the initial protests, and armed groups have banned them from reopening. They have also burned some schools down, and threatened others who did not comply with the ban. Around 42,500 children are thought to be out of school as a result, and the figure is expected to rise to 311,000 in 2019.⁵³

The insecurity and violence have also undermined people's livelihoods. The majority of the population depends on agriculture and small-scale trade for a living, and people's inability to access their land and markets as a result of displacement has led to serious food shortages.⁵⁴

Humanitarian needs in both the Southwest and Northwest regions are acute, but the response has been limited. Instances of new displacements have even been reported in the Ouest and Littoral regions, as the conflict has spilled over into neighbouring regions. The UN's Humanitarian Response Plan published in May 2018 called for \$15.2 million to reach 160,000 people, but the number of IDPs and others in need has since risen significantly. Very few international agencies are present on the ground, and those who are have had to prioritise the little funding they receive to address the basic needs of the newly displaced people.⁵⁵ The

response began to gather pace in the second half of the year, but by the end of the year, only 40 per cent of the requested funding had been secured.⁵⁶

Education lies at the heart of Cameroon's new conflict, and the government has continued to enforce French in anglophone schools despite intense and widespread opposition. Doing so drives the tensions that have triggered violence and displacement. The education sector has been particularly hard hit, but the response has been hampered by limited funding and competing priorities.⁵⁷ More humanitarian assistance will reduce the impact on those affected, particularly children, but a political solution to the conflict is key to preventing further displacement.



Displaced families in northeast Cameroon waiting to receive emergency aid. Photo: NRC/Philippe Douryan

| Notes

50. Human Rights Watch, "These killings can be stopped": abuses by government and separatist groups in Cameroon's Anglophone regions", July 19, 2018.
51. Journal du Cameroun, "Rights group says over 100 villages burnt in Cameroon's Anglophone regions", August 22, 2018.
52. OCHA, "Emergency Response Plan, Summary, Cameroon North-West and South-West", May 2018.
53. UNICEF, "Humanitarian Action for Children - Cameroon", 2019, available at, <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/cameroon.html>.
54. OCHA, "Emergency Response Plan, Summary, Cameroon North-West and South-West", May 2018.
55. OCHA, "Cameroon: Situation Report N°1, North-West and South-West Crisis", November 30, 2018; UNICEF, "Humanitarian Action for Children - Cameroon", 2019, available at, <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/cameroon.html>.
56. OCHA, "Cameroon: Situation Report N°2, North-West and South-West Crisis, 31 December 2018", January 18, 2019.
57. OCHA, "Emergency Response Plan, Summary, Cameroon North-West and South-West", May 2018.