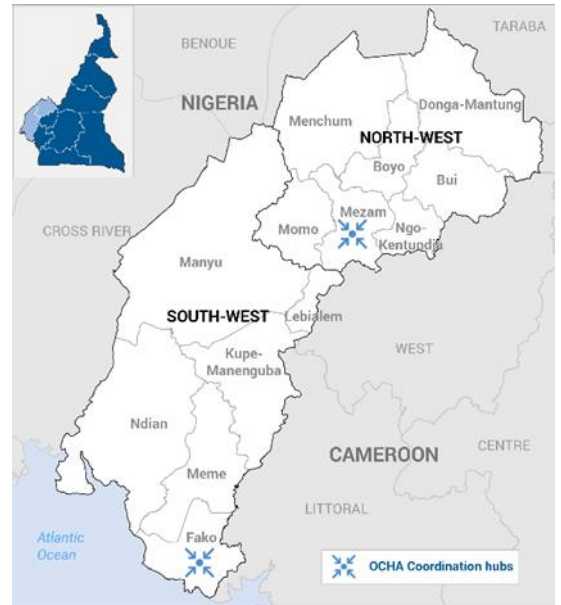


This update is produced by OCHA Cameroon in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- On 11 September, a non-State armed group (NSAG) announced a general lockdown in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions from 15 September to 2 October 2021.
- All schools and community learning spaces were closed, except for some schools in a few urban areas which are operating at less than 60 per cent of their capacity, compared to the first week of the 2021-2022 academic year.
- About 200,000 people missed food assistance due to the interruption of humanitarian activities and food distributions.
- The closure of banks and markets operating at a limited capacity have aggravated food insecurity, increased commodity prices and have an adverse impact on the socio-economic activities.
- Health Cluster partners operating in hard-to-reach or conflict affected areas have not been able to operate mobile clinics or provide life-saving assistance.
- Notable increase in violence, kidnappings and attacks against people defying the lockdown including bike riders, students and teachers were reported.
- OCHA and humanitarian partners continue to advocate with all parties to facilitate humanitarian access to provide life-saving assistance to the most affected people.



Source: OCHA  
The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

### SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 11 September 2021, a non-State armed group (NSAG) declared a general lockdown in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions of Cameroon from 15 September to 2 October 2021. The decision banned all movement, work, or social activity in the two regions. Over weekends, from Friday to Sunday, only taxis and motorbikes can circulate, and people are allowed to go to markets and attend religious services. The announcement explicitly banned humanitarian organisations of conducting activities, with the exception of ambulances for medical emergencies only.

With some local differences and a few exceptions in some urban settings, the ban on movements and activities was widely respected by the population, partly also because of fear of violence or death in case of non-compliance. Private and public transportation services of passengers, goods and services were disrupted, as well as commercial and business operations including markets. Access to basic services including health, education and livelihoods was severely affected.

The lockdown takes place in a context of high insecurity with, in certain areas, frequent use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against military, and armed confrontations between state security forces and NSAGs. This makes humanitarian access very challenging and negatively affects the civilian population in terms of protection violations, limits their access to humanitarian assistance and services, and causes new displacement. Since 15 September, United Nations and humanitarian partners were obliged to fully suspend humanitarian activities and put on hold the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need in both regions.

On the eve of the lockdown, about 700 people fled their villages to West and Littoral regions, and about 1,800 persons moved to urban centers or safer localities within the North-West and South-West. Deprived of humanitarian assistance in the new locations and without access to economic activities, their vulnerabilities are being exacerbated.

Moreover, the lockdown is increasingly impoverishing the affected people, especially those dependent on daily work to survive. With the absence of banking services, risks of resorting to negative coping mechanisms are aggravated.

The humanitarian response, which is already underfunded, is hindered by prolonged delays in the implementation of activities and additional costs related to potential project extensions which further increase costs. As of 28 September, only 15.8 per cent of the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for the NWSW has been funded.

## HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

### Food Security

In the North-West and the South-West regions, where 1.1 million people are food insecure<sup>1</sup>, Food Security Cluster partners could not distribute food assistance to 200,000 vulnerable people in September. The decline in commercial activities, limited cash flow and disrupted movement of basic necessities in the market, including food items, resulting in an increase in the price of basic commodities and scarcity of basic items and food supplies. Due to the interdependence between urban and rural areas in the North-West and South-West, and with other regions and major cities, the opening of markets over weekends is unlikely to be sufficient to allow the population to procure essential goods.

Food voucher distribution has been affected with vendors facing difficulties reimbursing their funds due to the closure of banks. Moreover, Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) partners were not able to deliver fertilizers on time to 300 farmers, which will affect the quality of their agricultural products and increase the perishing risks of small farmers' crops, noting that the lockdown severely hampered access of farmers to their agricultural lands, and drastically reduced their productivity and income generation.

### Health – Nutrition

The ban on movements and activities has worsened people's access to timely and equitable health care. Getting to health facilities has become a major challenge. Due to the limited number of ambulances in the North-West and South-West, most patients use local transportation to reach the nearest health facility, which is not possible during the lockdown.

Health Cluster partners operating in hard-to-reach areas or highly affected areas have not been able to operate mobile clinics or provide life-saving interventions. COVID-19 vaccination and the transportation of essential medications to health facilities were severely disrupted. Pregnant women, children under five, patients with chronic diseases, people living with HIV/AIDS, and victims of trauma are the most affected. Malnutrition patients could not receive their life-saving supplements.

### Protection

Protection partners had to halt their services including Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, which aggravated the situation of 300-500 beneficiaries among the most vulnerable people. The unavailability of administrative services prohibited the issuance of birth certificates for newborns, and the lack of protection partners' support in issuing legal documents put youth and men at higher risks of harassment and arbitrary arrest. Protection monitoring activities had to be suspended, limiting protection by presence, reporting of protection incidents, and making it impossible to refer incident survivors to the needed services and assistance.

### Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR)

With the suspension of gender-based violence (GBV) activities, survivors of GBV were unable to receive psychosocial support and case management. Due to movement restrictions, protection partners are unable to assist survivors of violence. Women who usually generate income to provide for themselves and their families have become more vulnerable. Addressing GBV cases before courts has been postponed due to the lockdown, causing further justice delays.

As men are forced to stay at home with women and girls, and with the economic burdens, distress and frequent frictions, an increase in GBV cases is expected. Even if the nature of the lockdowns is very different, it is anticipated, based on the experience of the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, that women and girls are at higher risk of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, forced marriages and unplanned pregnancies.

### Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR)

Children were deprived of schools and child-friendly spaces and forced to stay at home where they are under increased risk of sexual abuse, forced recruitment by armed groups, and violence. The hindered medical services for children and particularly newborns can be life threatening. The reunification of separated children with their families and foster services for orphaned or unaccompanied children were put on hold, exposing those children to higher risks.

<sup>1</sup> Cadre Harmonisé, March 2021

## Education

Since the beginning of the crisis in 2016, education has been highly affected. Many schools have closed to avoid frequent attacks against education facilities. Teachers and students have been attacked, kidnapped, threatened and killed. In 2021, more than 700,000 children are deprived of education in the North-West and South-West regions.

The lockdown has exacerbated a situation which had started to slightly improve with the return to school in September 2021. Schools and community learning spaces in most localities have been closed, except a few urban areas mainly in the South-West. Schools are not allowed to operate even from Friday to Sunday. Since 14 September, eight students were kidnapped in Bamenda, the administrative capital of the North-West, they were harassed and humiliated before being released after ransom was paid by their families. In Donga-Mantung division in the North-West, a girl was attacked, and her fingers were chopped in reprisal for defying the lockdown and going to school. Five public school principals were kidnapped in Ngo-Ketunjia division in the North-West, and one of them was killed six days later.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) – Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI)

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene partners were coerced to stop their activities, which caused a delay in the delivery of services, and additional unplanned costs. Partners working on Shelter and non-food items (NFI) were not able to deliver assistance to more than 4,500 vulnerable persons recently displaced.

For further information, please contact:

**Carla Martinez**, Head of Office, OCHA Cameroon, [martinez14@un.org](mailto:martinez14@un.org)

**Ali Dawoud**, Head of Sub-Office, North-West and South-West region, OCHA Cameroon, [abdelrahmana@un.org](mailto:abdelrahmana@un.org)

**Ilham Moussa**, Head of Bamenda Sub-Office, North-West region, OCHA Cameroon, [moussa22@un.org](mailto:moussa22@un.org)

For more information, please visit [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org) | [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) | [www.humanitarianresponse.info](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info)