



CAMEROON: POPULATION MOVEMENT

DREF Bulletin no.
MDRCM004

28 May 2007

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in 185 countries.

In Brief

This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below, reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 166,876 (USD 137,914 or EUR 101,754) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs of some 20,000 affected persons.

This operation is expected to be implemented over 3 months, and will be completed by end of August 2007; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

This operation is aligned with the International Federation's Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Background and current situation

In recent years, a significant number of people from the Central Africa Republic (CAR) have been crossing over into Cameroon. However, more population movements have been experienced due to an escalation of the conflict in CAR towards the end of 2006. Most of the displaced people are currently staying in the Eastern part of Cameroon (Garoua Boulai, Gado Badzeré and Kentzou districts) and in the Adamaoua Province (Meinganga, Mendougou and Batoua-Gadolé districts and surrounding villages). The total displaced population is over 20,400, including women and children from pastoral and agricultural minority groups; at least 12,000 are in the East Province while 8,000 are in Adamaoua Province.

Table 1: Breakdown of the displaced population (by age and gender)

Age groups	Male		Female		Total
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
0 - 5 years	2,381	11.7	2,278	11.2	4,659
6 - 14 years	3,023	14.8	2,992	14.7	6,015
15 - 59 years	4,361	21.3	4,789	23.4	9,150
60 years and above	434	2.1	165	0.8	599
Total	10,199	49.1	10,224	50.1	20,423

Source: United Nations High Commission for Refugees census (November-December 2006)

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The displaced people are faced with severe malnutrition and food insecurity due to reduced livelihood activities; some have lost their livestock during the rainy season – which was followed by an abrupt drought – while others sold their livestock due to lack of pasture. The loss of livestock has had a serious impact on the coping mechanisms of the affected people and those from pastoral communities have now turned to sedentary agriculture as a coping mechanism. Though local communities have availed some land, the displaced people lack agricultural implements and seeds for planting. A number of these populations have no alternative but to be involved in selling of firewood; however, this activity cannot be carried out now due to the onset of the rainy season, leaving them with no other sources of income.

Recent assessment reports indicate that the malnutrition rate is 27 per cent among children aged under five years, in particular those who did not benefit from the disinfection campaign jointly organized by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of Cameroon in 2006. Adults can no longer provide proper health care to their children or cater for the survival of their families; only 4.4 per cent of the adults can afford a meal a day since accessing it is becoming more difficult.

As observed during a joint Federation/Cameroon Red Cross Society evaluation conducted in April 2007, living conditions have deteriorated and malnutrition is increasing in both provinces, with 89 per cent of households living on one meal per day. Adding to this food ratio is mango, the only seasonal fruit available at the time of the evaluation. The coping mechanisms of these vulnerable people have been seriously reduced, and they are left with no other option but to do farming. There is, therefore, the need to provide them with necessary tools and seeds.

It has also been observed that the area lacks health and sanitation facilities, a scenario that is contributing to a very precarious health situation. Only 12 per cent of the population have access to drilled water points while the rest rely on rivers and ponds. Many children are suffering from malnutrition and the mortality rate is increasing, as mothers have to deliver in very precarious conditions. The lack of hygiene and clean water is contributing to the deteriorating health situation of the entire population. The situation in the field is so critical that unless action is taken urgently, it could become a serious humanitarian disaster.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Cameroon Red Cross Society has been active at branch level, from receiving to accommodating the displaced people. Training sessions in water chlorination and distribution techniques were conducted and continuous monitoring of the population influx is ongoing. However, the deteriorating situation had led the local branch volunteers to call upon the national office for an urgent intervention before a humanitarian disaster occurs.

The National Society, together with the Federation’s Central Africa Sub-Regional Office (CASRO), undertook a joint evaluation mission in the area to determine the vulnerability and the possible intervention required. The assessment findings indicate that priority needs include food, nutrients, water and sanitation interventions, agricultural tools and seeds as well as health interventions.

Coordination

The Government of Cameroon has granted access to plots of land for the displaced people to do farming. Towards the end of 2006, UNICEF distributed BP5 biscuits with protein to malnourished refugee children in the East and Adamaoua provinces. On their part, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR conducted an evaluation mission in the targeted localities in January 2007. Presently, UNHCR is still in the field registering and issuing refugee cards. Working in collaboration with CARE International, “Femmes du Département du Mbéré” (FADEM) – a local non-governmental organization – assessed malnutrition in a village targeted in Adamaoua Province. Intervention of partners should be up and running by July as they are now raising funds and setting all the logistics in place for the operation.

Plan of Action

This Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-supported plan of action aims to improve the livelihood of some 20,000 displaced persons; it will cover the immediate needs before other partners get on board.

Goal: Reduce the vulnerability of the displaced population from Central African Republic (CAR) in the Eastern and Northern regions of Cameroon.

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Objective: To improve the livelihood of some 20,000 displaced persons through a relief operation and integration initiatives.

Activities:

- Training Red Cross volunteers from local committees involved in the operation on distributing items and treating water wells;
- Distributing enriched flour, salt and sugar for 8,000 children;
- Chlorinating water points;
- Distributing/providing seeds and agricultural tools (hoes, cutlass and files) to 1,000 heads of families;
- Sensitizing traditional birth attendants and the displaced persons on hygiene rules;
- Advocating before UN agencies such as UNICEF, WFP, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – through UNHCR – on behalf of the displaced persons.

Expected results:

- 8,000 children receive enriched flour, salt and sugar within 30 days;
- 1,000 heads of families have received agricultural tools and seeds, and have therefore improved their self-food assistance;
- At least 65 per cent of the displaced population has access to clean and safe potable water;
- At least 65 per cent of the displaced population is practicing hygiene rules for better health;
- Through advocacy by the Cameroon Red Cross Society, UN agencies have been informed of the plight of the vulnerable displaced persons and respond efficiently to their needs;
- Well-trained volunteers carry out all the activities smoothly.

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