

CAMEROON

Caught in the middle of dual conflicts



KEY FACTS

Population: **26.5 million**

4 million people in need of humanitarian aid

4.9 million facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

1 million people internally displaced, of which 720,000 in Northwest/Southwest and 320,000 in the Far North

430,000 refugees hosted, mostly from Central Africa Republic (310,000) and Nigeria (117,000)

115th (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

51.1% of women over 15 report they have ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner

148th (of 167 countries) for women's equality

145th (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

3/5 score for severity of access constraints

43% of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Women at an IRC center in Cameroon cut and sew masks to earn an income and bolster local COVID-19 mitigation measures.

PROBABILITY

7 HUMAN THREAT

4 NATURAL THREAT

IMPACT

6 CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

8 EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

Cameroon's continued presence on the Watchlist is rooted in two distinct violent conflicts in the Northwest/Southwest regions and the Far North, neither of which has an end in sight.

Increasing violence and insecurity from two distinct conflicts in Cameroon has left over a million people internally displaced. Conflict persists in the Northwest and Southwest regions between separatists and the government, rooted in longstanding grievances including the marginalization of the minority English-speaking regions. Meanwhile, the Far North is experiencing violence driven by armed groups based in the Lake Chad Basin. COVID-19 is exacerbating needs, which drove a nearly **60%** increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance during 2020. The lack of progress towards political solutions and continued violence are likely to result in further displacement and increases in humanitarian needs in 2021.

"Cameroon faces multiple distinctive humanitarian crises and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated the situation. Many Cameroonians are in dire need of protection services, particularly women and girls who face high levels of violence. The IRC is working across the country, from the Far North to the Southwest and Northwest regions, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, protect women and girls and help people survive and earn an income."

- Hannah Gibbin
Country Director, IRC Cameroon



HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Cameroon is rapidly evolving into a protracted emergency, which COVID-19 has dramatically compounded.** Cameroon has seen a rapid rise in humanitarian needs, from [2.8 million](#) people in need in December 2016 to [4 million](#) in 2021. Militancy spilling over from northeast Nigeria first started to affect the Far North of Cameroon in 2014 and continued at high levels into 2015 before dropping back down again. Then, in 2017, an insurgency broke out in the Northwest and Southwest regions, which are mostly English-speaking, leading to levels of violence against civilians that rapidly surpassed those in the Far North. At the same time, eastern Cameroon hosts over 280,000 refugees from CAR. COVID-19 has exacerbated needs in each area and led to a doubling in the number of people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3-5) to 2.1 million ([FAO-WFP](#)).
- ▶ **Conflict between separatists and government forces will continue to drive needs in the Northwest and Southwest.** The conflict has resulted in over 3,000 deaths and displaced 600,000, while leaving 80% of health and education services non-functioning ([OCHA](#)). The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Northwest/Southwest has more than doubled since 2019, rising to 3 million by mid-2020 ([OCHA](#)). While one armed group unilaterally declared a ceasefire in the wake of COVID-19, none of the other dozen or more secessionist groups did, nor did the Cameroonian military. Some village chiefs are even reportedly creating militias ([VOA](#)) for protection in a sign that conflict - and the number of actors involved - is likely to rise.
- ▶ **Cameroon also faces renewed violence from armed groups in the Far North.** The conflict has killed 2,000 people, displaced 250,000 and left over [1 million](#) people in need of humanitarian assistance by mid-2020. While violence against civilians in the Far North of Cameroon has remained broadly steady for the last five years, it has been rising across the wider Lake Chad Basin in both 2019 and 2020. This pattern suggests a real risk that Cameroon will see greater violence in 2021. Moreover, the disruption to livelihoods and social services over a period of several years increases the vulnerability of the local population, while Cameroon continues to host 117,000 Nigerian refugees fleeing violence in northeast Nigeria.
- ▶ **Cameroon is an increasingly challenging environment for humanitarians.** Attacks on aid workers in Cameroon rose sharply in 2020 with 19 attacks – more than double the attacks in the previous decade combined ([Aid Worker Security Database](#)). IRC and partners have even witnessed attacks on civilians during humanitarian distributions ([IRC](#)). In the Northwest and Southwest, around 65% of areas are inaccessible to aid workers, while humanitarians' movements are increasingly undermined by checkpoints and lockdowns ([UN](#)). At the same time, Cameroon is consistently one of most underfunded humanitarian responses in the world.

THE IRC IN CAMEROON

The IRC has responded to humanitarian needs in the Far North and the Southwest and Northwest since 2016. We work in communities with large displaced populations, where we provide basic supplies, cash assistance, clean water, improve sanitation facilities, emergency case management and help individuals obtain identification documents. We support the restoration of livelihoods for conflict affected populations through cash assistance, agricultural inputs, business grants, vocational training opportunities, and Village Savings and Loan Associations. The IRC supports women and girls through safe spaces and counseling, referral pathways for survivors of sexual assault, and support for community-level protection committees, protection monitoring and alert systems. We also help children access education through safe learning spaces. Learn more about the [IRC's Cameroon response](#).

