Cameroon

Facts & Figures

- 153 out of 188 countries in Human Development Index (UNDP)
- 220,000 internally displaced due to the spillover of Nigeria’s conflict
- Around 289,000 refugees:
  - 76,500 from Nigeria
  - 212,500 from Central African Republic
- 2.4 million people at risk of food insecurity
- EU humanitarian funding:
  - €19 million in 2017
  - €61.7 million since 2013

Introduction

The Lake Chad basin crisis has become one of Africa’s most acute crises and Cameroon is one of the four countries affected. Since 2015, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Nigerian refugees who have crossed to the Far North region fleeing violence from Boko Haram, reaching 76,500. Attacks from the armed group have also displaced around 220,000 Cameroonians. On top of this, Cameroon hosts the highest number of refugees from Central African Republic. Some areas have alarming levels of food insecurity and malnutrition.

What are the needs?

Cameroon is affected by a triple humanitarian crisis: armed conflicts in Nigeria and Central African Republic (CAR) have resulted in a massive influx of refugees into regions which were chronically vulnerable. In the Far North, Minawao refugee camp currently hosts over 58,000 Nigerian refugees. Close to 35,000 unregistered refugees are located outside the camp with no protection. In addition, the total number of CAR refugees in eastern Cameroon currently stands at 212,500 persons. Most refugees have no income and still rely entirely on humanitarian assistance to cover their basic needs. The influx of refugees has had a strong impact on host communities, who have to share their already scarce resources.

Compounding the displacement is a worrying food and nutrition situation, particularly in the Far North Region. The World Food Programme’s Emergency Food Security Assessment (October 2016) indicates that 23.8% of households are food insecure in the four regions of Cameroon affected by the crises. Around 2.4 million people are exposed to food insecurity, of which 1.5 million live in the Far North region. In some areas of this remote part of the country, severe acute malnutrition (SAM) levels exceed the 2% emergency threshold.
How are we helping?

Since 2013, the EU has allocated a total of €80.7 million in humanitarian assistance to Cameroon. In the last two years, the European Commission’s European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department has substantially increased its support to respond to the growing needs. In 2017, €19 million has been allocated to provide life-saving assistance in the Far North region as well as in eastern Cameroon.

The funds contribute to maintaining the humanitarian response to refugees from Nigeria and Central African Republic, covering internally displaced persons and vulnerable host communities. Shelter, food, safe drinking water and sanitation, primary healthcare, support to livelihoods, protection and emergency education are the main areas of work. Furthermore, the acute food insecurity and undernutrition of the most vulnerable population are addressed.

In the Far North Region, it was necessary to adapt the previous nutrition programmes, focused on prevention, to allow them to respond to the current nutrition emergency. The prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition are also supported by the European Commission. About 300,000 people benefit from food assistance in the form of cash transfers or food supplies.

As the crisis becomes protracted, the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees remains crucial but should be associated to the design of more sustainable strategies of response, to improve livelihoods and self-reliance of refugees - making it possible for them to get an income so that they are less dependent on humanitarian aid- as well as to reduce the possibility of tensions with local communities. In parallel, properly linking humanitarian assistance to development actions is of paramount importance so as to build the resilience of vulnerable populations.

In order to improve humanitarian access to the areas of the Far North hosting the largest number of internally displaced populations – where few organisations are present due to insecurity – the Commission is also funding the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), with flights connecting Yaoundé, Maroua and Ndjamena.