

Protection and AAP Analysis

Far North Region of Cameroon



World Food
Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

July 2023

Contents

	Page
I. Executive Summary	3
II. Methodology	3
III. Introduction	5
IV. Protection context	6
V. Key Findings and Analysis	8
Acronyms	19

Protection and Accountability to Affected People (AAP) Analysis, Far North Region of Cameroon

I. Executive Summary

The Far North region of Cameroon is facing a severe, complex and protracted humanitarian crisis. It combines chronic insecurity due to the presence of armed extremists groups, Boko Haram related and others, with insufficient public and legal services and increased effects of climate change. The already precarious situation in the Lake Chad basin has been exacerbated by years of conflict, displacement, and direct targeting of civilians. The number of displaced people in Cameroon continues to rise as violence in the Far North region has led to a steady increase in displacement since 2014.

To improve the quality of World Food Programme (WFP) interventions in the Far North region of Cameroon, a Protection and Accountability to Affected Persons (AAP) analysis was undertaken in June 2023.

The analysis aimed at:

- Identifying the main contextual and programmatic protection risks.
- Identifying mitigation measures to ensure protection risks are minimized through the ongoing programmes and adjust programming accordingly.
- Informing the subsequent development of a Community Engagement Action Plan.

The analysis has identified several key protection risks as well as mitigation measures – some already in the course of being implemented. Key risks to be addressed include:

- Violence, attacks, theft and looting by Non- State Armed Actors (NSAGs)
- Harassment by State Security Forces (SSFs)
- Intercommunal violence: death and injury, destruction and looting
- Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Lack of civil documentation
- Access constraints for people living with disabilities and the elderly as well as other physical access constraints
- Manipulation and discrimination during targeting
- Lack of appropriateness of communication and CFM channels for beneficiaries with special needs
- Low level of inclusion and participation of affected people, especially people living with disabilities, in programming

II. Methodology

Objectives

In line with WFP's corporate guidance, the Protection and AAP analysis focused on key aspects outlined in the Protection Mainstreaming framework, including a) Safety, Security and Do No Harm, b) Meaningful Access, c) Accountability, and d) Participation and Empowerment.

Research questions:

This study tries to understand the overall humanitarian context and protection risks in the Far North region of Cameroon to ensure safe, accountable and inclusive ongoing and future programming. It specifically looks at what the protection risks are, what causes and who are the most at risks with the broader humanitarian context in general and WFP programming in particular.

Research questions of this analysis included:

- What is the overall protection situation and how could WFP interventions potentially unintentionally exacerbate risks to the affected population and beyond (do no harm, PSEA, access)?

- What are the main barriers preventing affected population (women, children, young people, people living with disabilities, forcibly displaced) from accessing and/or using assistance?
- How do different community groups access accurate, relevant, timely, and culturally sensitive information about WFP assistance?
- What are the preferred channels of communication with communities to receive information and provide feedback about WFP interventions?
- Which mechanisms are available to different segments of the affected population to actively participate in and influence WFP decision-making processes?

Data collection

The analysis consisted of a combination of secondary data review of available relevant secondary sources and qualitative primary data collection. A qualitative approach was used with open-ended semi-structured discussions. Participants were invited to reflect on needs and concerns that encompassed community members' daily lives, their experiences, and perspectives on how WFP's food assistance may positively and /or negatively affect their access to resources and services.

In June 2023, 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 20 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted. The 20 FGDs were conducted with different age, sex and diversity groups to ensure equitable participation and voice, given existing sociocultural dynamics. The FGDs took place in various localities and settings, including the Minawao refugee camp, with IDPs and host communities. In particular, criteria for the selection of FGD participants included: men and women of various age, including youth, people with disabilities, elderly, and women's groups. The 15 KII were conducted with programme staff of UNICEF, UNFPA, NGOs such as DRC, NRC and IRC and with WFP cooperating partners (CPs), and authorities and government line ministries. The assessment team also consulted WFP staff both in Yaoundé and in Maroua.

Participants were informed about the data collection exercise's objective; issues related to confidentiality and voluntary participation were explained before starting data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before starting data collection.

Focus group discussions

Region	Division	Locality	Status of Beneficiaries	# of FGD	# of disabilities - female	# of PLW disabilities - male	# of PLW women	# of men	# of girls	# of boys
Far North	Mayo Sava	Mora	IDP Community	6	4	5	15	8	7	7
	Mayo Sava	Mokio	Host community	6	14	19	9	7	9	7
	Mayo Tsanaga	Minawao (refugee camp)	Refugee community	6	17	17	23	13	22	12
	Mayo Tsanaga	Koza	IDP community	2	0	0	5	4	0	0
Total				20	35	41	52	32	38	26

Key Informant Interviews

Region	Organization	Responsibility/Function in Organization
Yaoundé	WFP	CBT Officer
	WFP	Head of CAM
	WFP	RAM Team
	DRC	Protection Coordinator and Head of Programme

	UNFPA	GBV Coordinator
	OCHA	GenCap
	IRC	Head of Programmes
Maroua	ADELP-NGO, Maroua	National coordinator
	MINAS	Regional Delegate Head Child Protection Head Protection People Living with Disabilities
	Plan International (WFP CO)	Emergency Response Manager (ERM) Child Protection Coordinator
	UNHCR	Lead cluster protection
	UNFPA	GBV Sub-cluster coordinator
	NRC	Protection
	WFP	Head of Security
	WFP	Protection and PSEA Focal Point

Limitations

As with any analysis, the choice of tools and techniques yields strengths and limitations. This analysis used a qualitative approach to gather multifaceted information and the perception of affected people.

A few key limitations are:

- The sample size is relatively small due to limited availability of time and human resources.
- A few women-only groups were facilitated by men due to the lack of female facilitators.
- The focus groups discussions were held in different languages (Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanouri, Mandara, English, French), at times translators were used between the different languages. This may contribute to reduced accuracy.
- Due to the lack of UNHAS (United Nations Humanitarian Air Service) flights between Maroua and Ndjamena and the security risks on the road, no focus group discussions were carried out in the Logone Chari department.

III. Introduction

Under its mandate of Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations, **WFP commits to preventing and responding to protection risks associated with hunger** in all contexts and to achieving successful protection outcomes for the affected people it serves.

WFP's proximity to the affected populations gives it the capacity and the responsibility to support positive protection measures, established to ensure that all protection risks that may arise from WFP's interventions are considered during Programme design including those related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

The population in the Far North region of Cameroon has limited access to basic services and protection services. Years of conflict and displacement has exacerbated this situation. The number of displaced people in Cameroon continues to rise as **violence in the Far North region has led to a steady increase in displacement since 2014. As of October 2022, the violence has displaced a total of 662,000 IDPs, returnees and refugees, an increase of 81,000 since October 2021.** Approximately 46% of new displacements recorded between January and February 2022 were related to the inter-communal conflict that broke out in Logone Birni in December 2021. As a result, it is estimated that over one million people in the Far North region need urgent assistance.¹

Throughout 2022, the protection environment in Far North worsened as result of the ongoing crisis.

The number of protection incidents has drastically increased and exacerbated vulnerabilities. In 2022, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) identified and documented over 6,200 protection incidents in Logone et Chari, Mayo Sava and Mayo Tsanaga division through protection monitoring activities. This is a 60% increase compared to 2021.²

Women and girls continue to face several risks of gender-based violence (GBV), with 12,450 cases of GBV recorded in 2022 through the Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) representing an 85,4% increase compared to 2021, where only 1,816 cases were reported. In the Far North, 23% of villages have no schools, and no school is accessible in nearby towns, with the situation more acute in Logone et Chari, where over 50% of villages have no schools and 32% have no schools nearby. Due to frequent attacks by non-state armed groups, and displacement, children are regularly exposed to violence, risks of abduction, maiming, exploitation and killing, as well as the consequences of negative coping mechanisms adopted by their families, such as child marriages. Displaced children are less likely to attend school and are heavily involved in household livelihoods through hazardous and potentially risky activities, including carrying heavy loads such as collecting firewood.

Conflict over natural resources in the Far North intensified in 2021 and is likely to reoccur. This region experiences a very long dry season and exceptional flooding during the rainy season, reducing farm yields and causing acute food shortages. The effects of climate change, conflicts and COVID-19 have led to an **increase in the projected food insecurity situation from since 2021.** The results of the March 2023 Cadre Harmonisé analysis indicate that from March to May 2023, 11 per cent of the population – about 3 million people – are in severe acute food insecurity in Cameroon, of which about 1 per cent is in the emergency phase – 4 (335'899 people) and over 10 per cent are in the crisis phase (2.6 million people). In addition, the number of divisions facing a crisis nationwide has increased from 12 in October 2021 to 17 in October 2022. **This confirms a geographical deterioration of the overall food security situation.** For the projected period, from June to August 2023, 12 per cent of the Cameroonian population is expected to be in severe acute food insecurity (3.2 million people), with less than 1 per cent in the emergency phase (206,300 people). Almost 11 per cent are projected to be in the crisis phase from June to August 2023 (3 million people). In 2023, the number of divisions facing a crisis is expected to increase. Between June and August 2023, 15 divisions are expected to fall in crisis compared to 11 reported for the same period in 2022. Large disparities are observed between the regions. Food insecurity is highest in the regions affected by violence and climate hazards or in the neighbouring ones. Over 23 per cent of the population of the Northwest, 21.5 per cent of the population of the Southwest and 16.7 per cent of the population of the Far North are food insecure. **The drivers of food insecurity in 2023 have so far been natural hazards, low production due to the rising costs of farm inputs (more specifically fertilizers and pesticides), increase in food and non-food items as a result of the Ukraine crisis and attacks on produce by crop pests and diseases.** All these continue to exacerbate vulnerabilities among affected people.

WFP's Response in the Far North region

In response to the needs of the affected populations, since 2014, WFP, with support from the Government and other partners, has been implementing an integrated package of interventions including life-saving emergency food assistance through food and cash-based transfers, school meals targeting schoolchildren in at-risks zones. There has been seasonal support to vulnerable local communities during the lean season, early recovery and resilience building, nutrition improvement and market access support to smallholders. The activities are implemented within the framework of the WFP Cameroon Country Strategic Plan (2022-2026).

IV. Protection context

The presence of armed groups in particular Boko Haram and its different splinter groups (JAS and ISWAP), together with the increasing effects of climate change have increased pressure on resources and basic services, especially in already poor and underserved areas, and significantly eroded the protective environment of the population. **In the Far North, access to basic social services is disrupted by ongoing insecurity. However, many services have never been available in the first place.** For example, 31 per cent of localities assessed have never had a health centre and have no health centre accessible in proximity. In several divisions in the Far North, there have never been any public sector officials, and only in 7 per cent of villages public sector officials are reported to have left due to insecurity and never returned.³ The Boko Haram crisis in the Lake Chad Basin has harmed people's livelihoods.

Extremists and other armed groups have looted and destroyed markets, cutting off many people's access to markets. Attacks against civilians, State security forces (SSF), including army, gendarmerie, police and their basis have continued. The civilian population continues to be subject to armed attacks, IEDs, kidnappings, including of children, looting, and destruction of property and infrastructure. Conflicts over use of natural resources are also driving population displacement such as the intercommunity conflicts in the Logone-Birni division at the beginning of December 2021. Violence in the Far North has led to a steady rise of displacement since 2014. As of October 2022, the violence has uprooted a total of 662,000 IDPs, returnees and refugees, an increase of 81,000 since October 2021.⁴

Throughout 2022, the protection environment in Far North has worsened as result of the ongoing crisis. **The number of protection incidents has drastically increased and exacerbated vulnerabilities.** In 2022, the IRC identified and documented 6,265 protection incidents in Logone et Chari, Mayo Sava and Mayo Tsanaga division of the Far North through protection monitoring activities. This is a 60% increase compared to 2021 which is partly due to an increase in IRC intervention locations in the Far North. The grave human violations perpetrated include theft or destruction of personal property (68%), physical assault and torture (9%), extortion of properties (8%), arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions (6%), killings (5%), forced disappearance/ kidnappings (4%), and attacks against or occupation of public infrastructure (0,5%). The protection situation further deteriorated in the first quarter of 2023 according to IRC protection monitoring activities.

In the Far North, **women and girls are particularly exposed to physical assault (35%) denial of resources (34%), psychological violence (18%), rape (6%), forced and/or early marriage (2%) and sexual assault (5%).** 77% of the GBV cases are perpetrated by an intimate partner and/or member of the family. Due to the unavailability of services, cost of transportation, and fear of retaliation and stigma, only 29% of survivors report rape within 72 hours. In addition, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits are not available in most health facilities.

The socio-cultural stigma surrounding GBV, the quality and availability of care services, socio-economic vulnerability, impunity for crimes, and the lack of information on the support and services available often prevent women and girls from accessing services in a timely manner. The climate crisis also continues to exacerbate gender-based violence by exposing women and girls who have to travel long distances to fetch water and firewood for their homes due to decreasing availability of resources. Women and girls are also exposed to the risk of early marriages and denial of access to socio-economic opportunities due to the archaic, patriarchal and discriminatory practices that deny them access to resources.

Children in the Far North region of Cameroon are facing multiple protection concerns due to the ongoing violence. Due to frequent attacks by non-state armed groups, and displacement, children are regularly exposed to violence, risk of abduction, maiming, exploitation and killing, as well as the consequences of negative coping mechanisms adopted by their families, such as child marriage. Displaced children are less likely to attend school and are heavily involved in household livelihoods through hazardous and potentially risky activities, including carrying heavy loads such as collecting firewood.

An increase in protection incidents affecting children continues to be observed. 23% of villages in the Far North have no schools, and no school is accessible in nearby towns, with the situation more acute in Logone et Chari, where over 50% of villages have no school and 32% have no school nearby⁵. In this context of schools closing and insecurity, the dropout rate (77% for girls and 76% for boys) is particularly important. Besides access issues, children in conflict-affected communities in the Far North continue to face heightened risks of exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect. Children represent 61% of the total displaced population⁶, and the number of unaccompanied or separated children is on the rise.

There is also a **lack of civil documentation** as a result of lack of legal infrastructures established and elongated duration required to process an identifying documentation for displaced persons. Assessments carried out in July-August 2022 established that out of the 12,345 identified and profiled, 8,345 did not have any form of identifying documentation. This exposes communities to restriction on the freedom of movement with the risk of arbitrary arrests and detention, denial or limited access to services and loss of property, or inability to claim housing, land and property upon return from displacement.

The region also reports incidents of injury caused by **unexploded ordnance (UXO), explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive device (IED)** left by Boko Haram which pose a threat to human life and forced displacement.

Exceptional floods affected over 313,000 people in the Far North in 2022, causing at least 23 deaths and displacing over 113,000 people. Some 31,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, and 48,000 hectares of fields and 6,700 animals lost. Around 151 primary and secondary schools were flooded, and more than 200

water points and 2,620 latrines submerged. A dozen health facilities were completely flooded and rendered non-operational.⁷

NSAG are the main perpetrators: protection monitoring data confirms that NSAG are responsible for at least 75% of incidents (between 75 and 94% of incidents per month). This is followed by state security forces (between 5 to 9% of incidents). Community members, including intimate partners, account for the rest of the incidents.⁸

V. Key Findings and Analysis

Protection risks in the Far North are diverse due to the complex, multiple and mixed situations of displacements, caused by armed conflict, intercommunal violence and natural disaster. In 2022, main protection risks reported were related to theft and destruction of property, kidnapping and killings. Men and boys were the victims of over 78 per cent of these incidents.⁹ **In the first quarter of 2023, theft and looting, physical violence and extortion and destruction of goods and personal property by all parties to the crisis and criminal gangs accounted for most protection incidents.**¹⁰ While men are the primary targets as traditional owners of goods and houses, **women and children are exposed to violence and abuse** aggravated by the lack of effective access to social services and of denial of resources. Logone et Chari, Mayo-Tsanaga and Mayo-Sava are the three main divisions affected by protection incidents.¹¹ In this context, main reported threats for children and their caregivers are family separation caused by forced displacement and abduction of children, often related to NSAG recruitment. Most children and adolescents formerly associated with NSAGs are facing stigmatization and struggle to reintegrate into their communities.

Based on the analysis above and findings from secondary data review and primary data (from consultations, key information interviews and focus group discussions with WFP programme beneficiaries), 11 main protection risks (with a total of 31 distinct protection risks) were identified. For each risk, mitigation measures are identified, some already being implemented to ensure safe, accountable and inclusive programming. Some of the actions suggested as mitigation measures are direct recommendations from FGD/KII participants.

For more details e.g. on existing mitigation measures in place, action owners for the mitigation measures for a quick implementation, please refer to the [Risk and Mitigation Matrix - Cameroon Protection Analysis.xlsx](#).

1. Safety and dignity and avoiding causing harm

Risk 1: Heightened risk of insecurity and attacks

Widespread insecurity in the Lake Chad basin and border area with Nigeria continues to affect the Far North region. Attacks against civilians, state security forces (SSF), including army, gendarmerie, and the police, persist and NSAGs and armed criminals continue to carry out lootings in crisis-affected areas. NSAGs continue to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs), primarily targeting military convoys.¹² In the Far North, the prevailing insecurity, and attacks by NSAGs limit the freedom of movement of goods and people, including humanitarian actors. Risks for humanitarian workers remain high as NSAGs continue to incite violence against humanitarian organizations. Most NSAG attacks are predatory, with civilians also sometimes targeted for their perceived collaboration with SSF and local vigilante committees.

Risk 1.1 Harassment from state armed forces during patrols and check points

Especially refugees, but also IDPs and host communities, reported harassment and extortion by SSF members. Some SSF members harassed refugees and, to extort bribes, refused to recognize valid documents held by refugees and asylum seekers. The harassment and extortion have often been intensified after food or cash distributions. Both genders reported that adolescent boys and men are mainly exposed to these threats by the fact they are males and expected to fight, and that they are the owners of goods and houses.

Mitigation measures:

1. Engage dialogue with authorities to limit harassment
2. Strengthen CMCoord and ensure uniformed authorities are informed ahead of time

Risk 1.2: Terrorist attacks and kidnappings carried out by Boko Haram (mainly JAS)

The civilian population continues to be subject to armed attacks and kidnappings, including of children, carried out by NSAG. In 2022, 90 per cent of security incidents in the Far North in 2022 occurred in the Logone et Chari, Mayo-Sava, and Mayo-Tsanaga divisions, with most attacks taking place in areas close to the Nigerian border.¹³ Most NSAG attacks are predatory, with civilians also sometimes targeted for their perceived collaboration with SSF and local vigilante committees. Food and cash distributions have been identified by FGD participants as a pull factor for attacks and kidnappings.

Mitigation measures:

1. Proximity of FD sites to beneficiary communities
2. Consult communities when selecting FD sites and take into account access and security risk
3. Approach ICRC to strengthen dialogue on IHL

Risk 2: Theft and looting

People's houses and other properties have been destroyed by armed groups. This has mostly affected those living in Mayo Sava and Mayo Tsanaga, close to the border with Northeast Nigeria, due to the presence of NSAGs there (JAS being the main actor). Theft and destruction of property are committed by non-state armed groups. According to focus groups participants, the latter carry out searches and loot people's property. This is done to ensure supplies for the groups. The NSAG are often aware of the food and cash distributions carried out and come to loot households, taking livestock, food and valuables afterwards.

Risk 2.1: Theft (moto bikes, cattle and food supplies) and looting after food and cash distributions, committed by armed actors (JAS but also other criminal groups)

The geostrategic location of the Far North, at the crossroads of important communication routes between Cameroon, Chad, Niger which feel left without government protection, take on their own security, leading to violence, death, and a proliferation of weapons. NSAGs have exploited these vulnerabilities and made the Far North a logistical base, a retreat area, a recruitment pool, a supply granary and impose taxes on the local population. The large livestock markets in the cross-border areas of the Lake Chad basin have facilitated cattle rustling, with the cattle thefts starting to work for NSAGs.¹⁴ 30,000 oxen were stolen in the region between 2014 and 2021. According to FGD participants and key informants, after food and cash distributions, theft and looting, especially in the villages close to the Nigerian border is often observed. This seems to be carried out by either criminal gangs or Boko Haram splinter groups, such as JAS.

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure distributions are done only in the AM as army patrols end at 2pm.
2. Engage with communities to assess if additional distribution points should be established.
3. Strengthen CMCoord and ensure uniformed authorities are informed ahead of time

Risk 2.2: Theft and looting after food distribution committed by youth

In the Far North region, particularly in the Lake Chad basin area, the economic context is marked by poverty; the lack of access to, and sustainable management of, natural resources; limited income-generating and market opportunities; as well as a drastic reduction in agriculture/livestock production and touristic activities due to prevalent insecurity. In Logone Birni, 43 per cent of young people between 15 and 24 years do not go to school nor work.¹⁵ Focus group participants, both male and female, as well as the youth groups, insisted that with nothing to do, youth often turn to petty theft.

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure distributions are done only in the AM as army patrols end at 2pm.
2. Engage with communities to assess if additional distribution points should be established.
3. Engage with youth groups and ideally establish livelihood programs for youth.

Risk 3: Intercommunal violence: death and injury, destruction and looting of housing and livestock

In the department of Logone and Chari, tension between communities has been very palpable and in 2021, led to bloody clashes, death, injury, destruction of property and livestock as well as forced displacement of close to 100'000 people both within Cameroon and across to border to Chad. In general, these conflicts implicate Shuwa Arabs, Massa, Musgum, Kotoko and Kanuri communities. The Shuwa Arabs or Hassaouna Arabs are semi-nomadic pastoralists. The Kanuri are a sedentary farming and fishing community. The Kotoko are a group of fishermen and farmers. The Massa and Musgum earn their living mainly from agriculture, livestock and fishing. The communities implicated in the various conflicts all live in the same geographical areas (the Chari and Logone valleys and the shores of Lake Chad) and are scattered between at least two of the four countries bordering Lake Chad.¹⁶

Although such clashes are not new, an important feature to observe is the increasing use of firearms which has drastically increased the casualty rates and displacement. In recent years, their appropriation and use by communities against each other is alarming. In an area already weakened by the presence of Boko Haram (ISWAP and JAS), it is important to carefully consider these different sources of tension and inter-community conflicts.

Risk 3.1: Conflict between refugees and host communities over resources (mainly firewood and vegetables)

The Minawao refugee camp population and the host communities in the surrounding villages share very limited resources. According to all focus group discussions held in the camp, this has created conflict between the two groups. Refugees need firewood and vegetables, which they cannot find inside the camp, and which are not provided by any humanitarian actor. In search of both, they go into the host communities. Host communities perceive this as “stealing” and often physically attack the refugees when they catch them. There are also cases of sexual assault, described under risk 4.1.

Mitigation measures:

1. Under UNHCR lead, conduct community dialogue between host and refugee community.
2. Under UNHCR lead, promote consultation frameworks between the community leaders of the refugees and the host community to address issues that put their respective communities in conflict with the aim to find consensual solutions.
3. Put to scale UNHCR's "eco-friendly charcoal briquettes and improved stoves to promote access to alternative energy sources" project in the Minawao camp.
4. Conduct a conflict sensitivity assessment
5. Put to scale community garden and livelihood projects to ensure women have access to vegetables in the camp.

Risk 3.2: Land disputes between the host communities and refugees

As regarding risk 3.1, the limited space in the refugee camp as well as the very arid soil push refugees into the host communities for basic farming to ensure they can complement the reduced food ration they receive from WFP. According to the refugee focus group participants, often, host communities rent out the same piece of land multiple times to different refugees. This then leads to disputes between the different parties involved.

Mitigation measures:

1. Promote joint livelihood projects for the two communities.
2. Put to scale community garden projects to ensure women have access to vegetables in the camp.
3. Engage with NRC as the lead of the Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Area of Responsibility (AOR).

Risk 3.3: Conflict between farmers and nomad over destruction of crops

The reduction of resources available to herders, farmers and fishermen increases the risk of conflicts. As a result of the effects of climate change and ongoing insecurity, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists who migrate to the region negatively impact the already fragile peaceful coexistence in the Far North. Farmers are also increasingly using land traditionally used for grazing. At the same time, animal numbers are increasing, and soils are shrinking, forcing herders to graze their herds further south and use land normally reserved for agriculture. Some farmers resort to herbicides and breeders to bush fires in the middle of the dry season to fertilize land, devastating several thousand hectares of pasture each year.¹⁷ Focus group participants, especially in the host community settings, have reported conflict breaking out regularly.

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure WFP targeting does not exacerbate the existing tensions. Ensure beneficiaries are targeted in both communities and communication is done transparently.
2. Sensitizing on existing consultation frameworks which address conflict between farmers and nomads.
3. Capacitating on conflict sensitive programming.
4. Scale up the rehabilitation of natural resource base of vulnerable communities project already being implemented.

Risk 3.4: Lack of understanding of ethnic dimensions by WFP and CP staff can exacerbate ethnic tensions

There seems to be little understanding of the full ethnic dimensions of the situation in the Far North by WFP and CP staff. Currently, no reporting is done on ethnic belonging of beneficiaries. There is rivalry over political and economic power, currently mainly in the hands of the Arab Shuwa, who are, however, a minority in the area. There is also tension over limited natural resources, exacerbated by the fact that the different ethnic groups are farmers, herders and fishermen. The lack of understanding of the ethnic affiliations and underlying tensions could potentially spark or exacerbate conflict.

Mitigation measures:

1. Organize trainings and awareness raising sessions for staff on ethnic dimensions
2. Consider reporting on ethnic belonging

Risk 4: Gender-based violence (GBV)

Insecurity and violence expose women and girls to critical GBV risks. Forced marriage, sexual violence, and other gender-based violence are among the main protection risks reported by key informants in the Far North, followed by limited access to resources.¹⁸ The food insecurity that is affecting the Far North affects women and girls disproportionately and exacerbates their exposure to GBV.¹⁹ Conflict and displacement have aggravated GBV trends. In a context where girls' and women's social and economic status is low, the hardship created by the crisis generates a heightened risk of violence within the home.

Forced and early marriages are the combined result of pre-existing socio-cultural norms and negative coping mechanisms, common to families who lost their land and source of income when they were forced to flee. Early marriage is often used as a strategy to avoid early pregnancy outside of marriage, but also for parents struggling to cover their family's basic needs.²⁰

Men's frustration at being unemployed or underemployed, unable to fulfil their socially expected role of providers and protectors of the family, combined with the fact that violence is considered as socially acceptable in some communities, leads to a recourse to domestic violence as a means of asserting authority and dominance. From January to November 2022, 1,854 cases of GBV were reported in the Far North. The majority of GBV cases reported are denial of resources or opportunities (45 per cent), followed by physical assault (25 per cent), emotional abuse (19 per cent), forced marriage (2 per cent), rape (5 per cent), and sexual assault (3 per cent).

Close to 80 per cent of incidents of physical violence were committed by intimate partners.²¹ In the first half of 2022, 79 per cent of GBV incidents reported by the actors were perpetrated by intimate partners, representing an increase of 17 per cent compared to 2021.²² The privacy of the home is, as a matter of fact, the most dangerous place there is for many women. Intimate partner violence prevails as one of the most widespread forms of violence against women and girls.²³ The persistence of harmful cultural practices combined with the limitations of the judicial system impede the protection of women and children. The risk of ensuing impunity of perpetrators and the complicity of traditional leaders poses serious protection concerns.²⁴

Risk 4.1: Refugee women are exposed to sexual assault and rape when they go out in search of firewood and vegetables in the host communities around the refugee camp

In all focus group discussions held with women in the refugee camp, incidents of sexual assault and rape have been reported. They happen as women go out in search of firewood and vegetables into the surrounding villages of the host community. The host communities, who are already vulnerable, see their

limited resources being taken by refugee community and use sexual assault and rape to push away the refugees.

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure GBV pathways are known and used promptly by WFP and CP staff.
2. Coordinate and include as far as possible, the camp administrator (state representative) for options of solutions which can come from the competent state services.
3. Under UNHCR lead, conduct community dialogue between host and refugee community.
4. Put to scale UNHCR's "eco-friendly charcoal briquettes and improved stoves to promote access to alternative energy sources" project in the Minawao camp.
5. Put to scale community garden and livelihood projects to ensure women have access to vegetables in the camp.

Risk 4.2: Intra-household conflict and violence over use of limited assistance (70% ration)

With the ration being at 70%, both men and women focus group participants reported an increase in intra household conflict and GBV. Moreover, gender roles and perceptions have significantly changed due to the conflict. Women have seen their workload (traditionally heavy) increase while men, whose traditional role of head of household is undermined, are increasingly facing more difficulties finding jobs and gainful employment because of insecurity, displacement, and opportunities. This adds to intra-household tension and GBV. Moreover, women focus group participants pointed out that even if they are the receiver of assistance, male family members still have a lot of influence over how the assistance is being used.

Mitigation measures:

1. Provide school meals to reduce tension in household.
2. Put in place more livelihood projects in camp.
3. Include positive masculinity in program design.
4. Partner with organisations specialised in GBV.

Risk 4.3: Increase in early marriages as a negative coping mechanism

The focus group discussions with girls aged 12 to 18 as well as adult female focus group participants highlighted a perceived increase in early marriages as a coping mechanism of the families – both refugee and IDP – so that the dowry obtained can help the parents make ends meet and have one less person to feed.

Mitigation measures:

1. Strengthen sensitizations and awareness raising campaigns
2. Specifically target young girls for livelihood projects and school feeding projects.
3. Partner with organisations specialised in GBV and include the competent state services, such as MINAS, in out of camp activities.

Risk 4.4: Self-injury and suicide by girls due to unwanted pregnancies and early marriages

The young girls (age 12 to 18) highlighted a phenomenon rarely talked about. The rise in unwanted pregnancies and early marriages is leading to infliction of self-injuries amongst young girls and at times even suicide.

Mitigation measures:

1. Engage local civil society organizations on this, as topic is overly sensitive.
2. Topic to be included in sensitizations and awareness raising campaigns
3. Ensure referral pathways are in place and known by CP and young girls (services available in camp)
4. Partner with organisations specialised in GBV.

2. Meaningful Access to assistance

Risk 5: Lack of civil documentation

The lack of civil documentation has been reported as one of the main protection concerns by affected populations in the Far North.²⁵ The weaknesses related to the civil documentation system are pre-existing

the crisis but aggravated by the forced displacement and inadequacy of the legal framework and its implementation.

In the Far North region, 73 per cent of the displaced population does not possess either a birth certificate or a national identity card.²⁶ The lack of civil and legal documentation is exposing affected populations to serious protection risks, such as the restriction of the freedom of movement, arbitrary arrest and detention, denial or limited access services, loss of property, or inability to claim housing, land and property upon return. Many IDPs are facing the risk of eviction by returnee landlords as they are occupying premises that do not belong to them, facing the risk of secondary displacement.²⁷ Access to civil identification documents has deteriorated over the past year in the Far North, in a country that already had the lowest levels of identity document access compared to its neighbouring countries.²⁸

Gender gaps in ID are also important, as many programs require a national identification to register. In low-income countries, 45 percent of women do not have a national ID, compared to 30 percent of men. Similar to the above, if programs require identification in order to receive payment, they will disproportionately exclude women.

Risk 5.1: Lost/stolen/not updated documentation of refugee beneficiaries limit access to assistance

Refugees, both women and men, reported issues receiving assistance from WFP because of lost, stolen or not updated identify documents. Due to a lack of recognition of the UNHCR issued identification cards, refugees have also reported facing harassment by law enforcement agents when they look for livelihood opportunities. Refugees in the Far North, who are without documents or who have expired documents, are often perceived as affiliated with NSAGs. This undermines their chances to find self-reliance opportunities and access to basic and financial services to meet their needs.²⁹

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure beneficiaries are aware of the possibility of getting refugee cards reestablished.

Risk 5.2: Lack of ID card leads to possible exclusion of vulnerable beneficiaries (more women are lacking ID cards) from both cash and food distributions and harassment from law enforcement

ID cards of many IDPs have either been lost during flight, burnt by NSAG or they might not even have had them in the first place. WFP and its cooperating partners used ID cards to register beneficiaries for assistance. Without an ID card, it is difficult for WFP to provide assistance to beneficiaries. The loss and lack of civil and legal documentation has also put the affected population, particularly boys and men, at risk of harassment and arbitrary arrest by law enforcement officials.

Mitigation measures:

1. Sensitize IDPs on the necessity of ID cards and related civil documentation to receive WFP assistance and explain how to get them.
2. Link beneficiaries with partners who have projects on establishing new ID documents.
- 3.. Participate in task force on civil documentation.
4. Advocate with authorities for smooth establishment of ID cards for IDPs.

Risk 5.3: Identify theft, falsification of beneficiary information and diversion of funds

Cash-based programming relies on effective systems to verify the identity of beneficiaries and ensure that the assistance reaches the intended recipients. However, in the Far North, where populations may be dispersed, literacy levels can be low, and formal identification systems may be lacking, there is a risk of fraud and misuse. This can include identity theft, falsification of beneficiary information, and diversion of funds. More so, when the beneficiary lacks a national ID card (often women), to receive cash-based assistance, a proxy is used on which name the sim card is registered. Often this proxy is a male family member. There is a risk this power dynamic is affecting the household and the use of funds. The lack of civil documentation for beneficiaries constitutes a real limiting factor for their freedom of movement, their empowerment, their access to basic social services and, consequently, their socio-economic integration.

Mitigation measures:

1. Strengthen training of especially elderly, women and people living with disabilities (PLWD) in the use of mobile phones (digital literacy)

Risk 6: Access constraints for people living with disabilities and the elderly

In Cameroon, people with disabilities represent 15% of the population. According to the Minister of Social Affairs (Minas), 90% of this population is undereducated. This information is supported by the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), which has stated that only 2% of this vulnerable group is enrolled in school. Several factors contribute to the under-schooling of the disabled. These include the fact that they are perceived by their families and communities as burdens, the small number of specialized schools and the lack of adequate teaching materials.³⁰ People with disabilities are among the most marginalized and at-risk population in any crisis-affected country, and Cameroon is no exception.³¹ People with disabilities are more likely to be exposed to danger from attacks, due to barriers to escaping and staying out of harm's way, and because of the degradation of the support systems which existed before the crisis. In the Far North, the presence of persons with disabilities, physical or mental, is reported in all assessed villages. In 16 per cent of them, access to school was not possible for children living with disabilities and in 7 per cent of the villages, water points are inaccessible to PLWD.³²

Risk 6.1: Difficulties accessing distribution sites for PLWD and the elderly

FGDs underlined the difficulties for people living with disabilities and the elderly in accessing distribution sites, either due to distance and/or poor road conditions, poor placement of distribution site for instance for people using wheelchairs).

Mitigation measures:

1. Engage with PLWD and elderly to assess if additional distribution points should be established and where.
2. Take into account the needs of PLWD and elderly in the selection of distribution points (check for specifically physical constraints).
3. Explore ways to ensure elderly people or PLWD can assign a food collector and ensure a strong verification mechanism is put in place.

Risk 6.2: Distribution modalities are not suitable for persons with specific needs

FGDs highlighted that distribution modalities are not suitable for persons with specific needs, and this leads to challenges to accessing assistance as well as a lack of safety and dignity including before, during, and after distributions. Especially the elderly and people with reduced mobility mentioned difficulty in transporting the food ration received. Additional expenses for transport add an additional burden on already vulnerable people.

Mitigation measures:

1. Include transportation cost into assistance value.
2. Engage with donors on the cost of inclusion.
3. Have dedicated staff to supporting people with challenges to carry their rations at the distribution point

Risk 6.3: Children from parents with disabilities dropping out from school to make ends meet due to the insufficient food ration

The reduced ration (70%) pushes beneficiaries to find income generating activities. For people living with disabilities these opportunities are very sparse. FGDs highlighted the risk for parents with disabilities to only be able and rely on their children for additional income and therefore having them drop out of school.

Mitigation measures:

1. School feeding programs and ensure they know they qualify for it.
2. Strengthen livelihood projects specifically for parents living with disability.

Risk 7: Physical access constraints

The remote and inaccessible nature of many Far North regions can create logistical challenges for WFP programming. Limited transportation infrastructure, including roads and airstrips, coupled with unpredictable weather conditions, can restrict access to certain areas. This can result in delays in cash transfers and food distributions, making it difficult for beneficiaries to receive timely assistance. The Far

North often lacks reliable communication infrastructure and internet connectivity. This can hinder timely communication between program staff and beneficiaries, making it difficult to respond quickly to emerging safety and security concerns. It can also affect the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation processes. Road conditions worsen during the rainy season. For example, the national road between Kousseri and Maroua is frequently unusable between July and October, even more so for women, the elderly and PLWD.

Risk 7.1: Difficulties accessing distribution sites due to seasonal rivers during the rainy season

Seasonal floods are affecting the Far North. Last year, over 30,800 houses and at least 48,000 hectares of fields were destroyed by flooding due to heavy rainfall and overflow of the Logone River, with Mayo-Danay and Logone et Chari being the most affected divisions. FGDs as well as KII highlighted the massive impact of these seasonal floods on people's possibility to access services, including distribution sites.

Mitigation measures:

1. Promote cash for work (specifically measures that can mitigate the impact of floodings).
2. Reassessing the distribution points jointly with communities and multiplying distribution points.
3. Considering more use of mobile money in CBT during the rainy season.

Risk 7.2: The mobile telephone network excludes certain rural areas. In general, men have more access to telephones than women

The Far North often lacks reliable communication infrastructure and internet connectivity. It can exclude certain beneficiaries from receiving cash assistance (in time). In addition, mobile phone ownership and usage remains unequal.³³ Digital illiteracy also creates a barrier to humanitarian assistance access. Owning a smartphone, whether it is for individual or household use, requires basic digital literacy skills to navigate the technology and understand all aspects of the assistance and information available. Women more often than men, according to FGDs, claimed to lack the digital skills to use their phones to access assistance information in a timely manner. This is particularly true for older people.

Mitigation measures:

1. WFP is launching of a pilot to train 175 women in Far North on basic financial literacy and income generating activities in partnership with MINEDUB and MINPROF
2. Consider alternative modalities (vouchers could be an option) for certain rural areas without network coverage.

Risk 8: Manipulation and discrimination during targeting

FGD, KII and secondary data review, including post distribution monitoring (PDM) and Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) findings indicate a risk for manipulation and discrimination during the targeting of beneficiaries. The limited understanding of the ethnological dimension of the region by staff members, linked with the great power and influence of traditional rulers, heightens this risk. Traditional and religious leaders are key players in the Far North. They are gate keepers, opinion leaders and if not consulted and involved correctly can hinder humanitarian assistance.

Risk 8.1: Discrimination of displaced persons during the recording and distribution of CBT sims

CFM findings highlighted cases of discrimination of displaced persons during the recording of CBT sims. None of FGD confirmed this risk.

Mitigation measures:

1. Strengthen communication with communities.
2. Include this dimension in the drafting of the CE Action Plan.

Risk 8.2: Manipulation and interference with beneficiary lists risk overrepresenting certain ethnic groups and households associated with a traditional ruler

Moreover, a variety of stakeholders (WFP staff, CP staff, NGO partners) highlighted the risk of traditional and religious leaders manipulating and interfering with beneficiary lists, mainly it seems to overrepresent members of their own ethnic group. FGD participants, especially from minority groups, also indicated such tendencies.

Mitigation measures:

1. Traditional authorities should not have the only decision-making power in targeting committees.
2. Ensure the presence of trained WFP and/or CP staff in field to detect and prevent the misuse of power by trad. authorities.

8.3: Over and under-representation of certain ethnic groups due to lack of understanding of ethnic affiliation of beneficiaries by WFP and CP staff

As indicated under risk 3.4, there seems to be insufficient understanding of the full ethnic dimensions of the situation in the Far North by WFP and CP staff. This lack of understanding of the ethnic affiliation of traditional rulers and beneficiaries might lead to over and/or under representation of certain ethnic groups.

Mitigation measures:

1. Sensitize staff on ethnic dimensions in the Far North.
2. Sensitize beneficiaries on targeting criteria, which are based on vulnerability and not status or ethnic affiliation.

8.4: Demand for money by some committee members in exchange for receiving assistance

FGDs in the Minawao refugee camp highlighted cases of money being exchanged for receiving assistance. However, the participants confirmed these are isolated incidents.

Mitigation measures:

1. Strengthen and ensure communities know how to use the CFM systems in place.

3. Accountability

In total WFP Cameroon has 5 channels of information for receiving complaints, including the hotline, helpdesks, CMCs, suggestion boxes and discussion groups. Most cases (89.1%) were received through WFP's toll-free hotline ("8099"), followed by helpdesks (6%).³⁴

Risk 9: Communication is not adapted to the needs of people living with disabilities and the elderly***Risk 9.1: People living with disabilities, especially women living with disabilities and people living with mental illnesses, and the elderly do not receive appropriate, timely and accurate information about distribution of assistance and CFM in place***

FGDs with people living with disabilities as well as the elderly clearly indicated communication carried out by CP and WFP is not adapted to their specific needs. They highlighted that especially people living with a mental illness are not taken into consideration when preparing and delivering information about distributions and assistance. They also have bigger challenges accessing CFM in place.

Mitigation measures:

1. Customize communication to needs of PLWD and elderly in consultations with them.
2. Spend more time on communication with PLWD and elderly.
3. Use the UN Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines

Risk 10: CFM are not appropriate for all beneficiaries and not well known

The awareness about CFM channels, especially in the Far North seems to be limited. Just over half of the beneficiary households (51%) knew where and how to address their complaints and feedback.³⁵ Beneficiaries in the Far North also use CFM channels much less than beneficiaries from other regions: in 2022, only 643 cases were received from the Far North, compared to 8,290 from the Southwest and 4,123 from the Northwest. However, a high concentration of sensitive cases was recorded in the Far North region, with 42 sensitive cases received on a total of 643 cases received (6.5%), compared to only 19 sensitive cases on 8,270 cases in the South-West for instance (0.2%). Regarding case follow-up, only 57% of sensitive cases have been closed in the complaint management platform, it is therefore recommended to set up the CFM taskforce as indicated in the SOP which will ensure a better follow-up of these types of complaints.

Risk 10.1: Beneficiaries are not very aware of the CFM through which complaints and feedback can be channelled

According to the PDM from the 3rd quarter in 2022, just over half of the beneficiary households (51%) knew where and how to address their complaints and feedback. This indicates that awareness about CFM should be improved.³⁶ During the FGDs however, most participants knew the members of Complaints Management Committees through whom they can report their complaints. Nevertheless, understanding of the different reporting channels was limited with beneficiaries living with disabilities and the elderly.

Mitigation measures:

1. Strengthen awareness raising on existing CFM channels.
2. Find out in consultation with the people the most effective ways to be used, e.g. posters, announcements at community meetings/pre-distribution meetings, loudspeaker announcements in the camps/villages, printing hotline info at the backside of scope cards etc.
3. Ensure information on CFM channels as well as the channels themselves take into account the different language preferences of the beneficiaries.
4. Strengthening the capacities of the CPs in charge of distributions on CFM channels.
5. Set up the CFM taskforce as indicated in the SOP which will ensure a better follow-up of these types of complaints

Risk 10.2: Language barrier in the use of the WFP hotline limits effectiveness of CFM

The WFP hotline currently functions in three languages (French, English/Pidgin and Fulfulde). Refugees from Nigeria often speak Houssa or Kanouri, languages currently not served. Moreover, in the Far North 10 languages are spoken, including Shoua arabic, Musgu and Kotoko. Languages spoken by the different ethnic groups that had violent clashes in 2021 and were subsequently displaced.

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure more language options are available (especially Houssa and Kanuri).

4. Participation and Empowerment

Risk 11: Low level of participation of affected people, especially people living with disabilities, in programming

There have been efforts by WFP to engage the affected population in the needs assessment, response design and implementation. However, from the review and analysis it seems that the CO is currently on the “inform” and “consult” side of the spectrum but is not yet working towards including and empowering beneficiaries. During the FGDs held, it has been noted that the consultation is often restricted to the traditional leaders and many beneficiaries feel less consulted on targeting criteria.

Risk 11.1: Women and men living with disabilities are not sufficiently represented in the participation process throughout the project cycle - especially people living with mental illness

FGD – both with beneficiaries living with and living without disabilities – clearly highlighted the need to include people living with disabilities more effectively in the participation process. Specific accommodation should be made for people living with mental illnesses.

Mitigation measures:

1. Adapt the type of consultation and way of engaging with PLWD, especially people living with mental illness, to ensure their participation is meaningful.
2. Draft a community engagement action plan for improved participation of communities, mainly women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable and marginalized households.
3. Actively look for and partner with organisations for people with disabilities - if available.

Risk 11.2: Frustrations are felt by women who feel left out of the consultation process

FGD in both refugee camp setting as well as the IDP setting indicated frustrations expressed by female beneficiaries who feel left out in the consultation process. They are only informed of the decisions taken (for instance day and place of distribution) but feel that they do not have a possibility to contribute to the overall process.

Mitigation measures:

1. Ensure better representation of women in consultative processes. Ensure they report back to the larger female community.
2. Consultation and engagement with community-based structures and associations to improve WFP's food assistance programming
3. Draft a community engagement action plan for improved participation of communities mainly women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable and marginalized households

Risk 11.3: Assistance being not as relevant as it could be due to lack of consultation and participation of affected people

FGD with the elderly in refugee camp setting as well as IDPs indicated especially the elderly beneficiaries wished for other food options as they received. Less preferred food is distributed because beneficiaries were not consulted on the choice of the food basket. They indicated not to have any possibility to influence these choices.

Mitigation measures:

1. Consult beneficiaries (all the different segments of the affected population) on the choice of food and adapt where possible.

VI. Summary and Conclusion

The Far North region of Cameroon is facing a severe, complex and protracted humanitarian crisis. It combines chronic insecurity due to the presence of armed extremists' groups, Boko Haram related and others, with weak public and legal services and increased effects of climate change.

Throughout 2022, the protection environment in Far North has worsened as result of the ongoing crisis. The number of protection incidents has drastically increased and exacerbated vulnerabilities.

The analysis has identified several key protection risks, which have to be addressed. The report also highlights mitigation measures – some already in the course of being implemented.

The key risks identified include:

- Violence, attacks, theft and looting by NSAG
- Harassment by SSF
- Intercommunal violence: death and injury, destruction and looting of housing and livestock
- Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Lack of civil documentation
- Access constraints for people living with disabilities and elderly as well as other physical access constraints
- Manipulation and discrimination during targeting
- Lack of appropriateness of communication and CFM channels for beneficiaries with special needs
- Low level of inclusion and participation of affected people, especially people living with disabilities, in programming

VII. Risks and mitigation measures matrix

Please find the risk and mitigation measures matrix for more details: [Risk and Mitigation Matrix - Cameroon Protection Analysis.xlsx](#)

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AOR	Area of Responsibility
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CMC	Complaints Management Committees
CNDH	National Commission on Human Rights
CP	Cooperating Partners
ERW	Explosive remnants of war
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
FN	Far North
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender Based Violence Information Management System
HLP	Housing, Land, and Property
ID	Identification
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
IRC	International Rescue Council
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
NW	North-West
PBWG	Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women and Girls
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PEP	Post-exposure prophylaxis
PLWD	People Living With Disability
RAM	Research, Assessment and Monitoring
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SSF	State Security Forces
SW	South-West
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
WFP	World Food Programme

- For general queries contact hq.emergencies.transitions@wfp.org
- For Field support requests contact prop.fieldsupport@wfp.org