



# THE MANAGEMENT OF DISPLACED PERSONS IN CONFLICT ZONES: AN APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF THE UNHCR IN THE CONFLICT-TORN ANGLOPHONE REGIONS OF CAMEROON

---

By

**Stephen Ajanga Obah Echochu**

A peace and conflict expert from the Department of International Relations and conflict resolution in the University of Buea.

**Email:** [echochustephen20@gmail.com](mailto:echochustephen20@gmail.com)

**Tel:** +(237) 674-227-692

## Abstract

Hundreds of people have been displaced in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon due to the outbreak of an armed conflict in these regions in late 2017. The conflict which started as a crisis in 2016 escalated into a full-blown armed conflict in 2017 between armed separatist fighters and government forces. The armed conflict has caused a huge number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and has forced the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to get involved in the armed conflict in 2017 with a mandate to protect and assist the IDPs and refugees fleeing the violence, killings and destruction in the conflict-torn Anglophone regions of Cameroon. This paper critically appraises the activities of the UNHCR in managing the numerous IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone Cameroon living across Cameroon and Nigeria respectively.

**Keywords:** Management, Displaced Persons, Conflict Zone, UNHCR, Anglophone Regions

## Introduction

Millions of people flee from their homes daily due to the outbreak of armed conflict, persecution, human rights violations or economic hardship. The increasing number of armed conflicts around the globe has in turn led to an increasing number of displaced persons in the world. László (2018: 1), states that the aspect of people fleeing their homes due to armed conflict is not a new

phenomenon; it has been there since time immemorial. The phenomenon only gained grounds in the international scene only after the outbreak of World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII), which brought an untold human suffering with millions of people escaping from their homes and seeking refuge in safer places like in bushes or in different town. This led to the creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1951 to assist and protect this displaced group of people and find a lasting solution for them. The organization was created at the Geneva Convention of 1951 with a prime objective to protect the millions of people who have fled their homes due to armed conflicts (László, 2018: 1).

The aspect of people fleeing their homes due to armed conflict is not a new phenomenon; it has been there since time immemorial. The phenomenon only gained grounds in the international scene only after the outbreak of World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII), which brought an untold human suffering with millions of people escaping from their homes and seeking refuge in safer places like in bushes or in different town (Crisp 2010: 32). This led to the creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1951 to assist and protect this displaced group of people and find a lasting solution for them. The organization was created at the Geneva Convention of 1951 with a prime objective to protect the millions of people who have fled their homes due to armed conflicts (László, 2018: 1).

The socio-political crisis related to corporative demands that began in the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon in 2016 metamorphosed into an armed conflict between armed separatist fighters and regular government forces in 2017. This has occasioned the displacement of people within and without the country. Many people around the border areas have moved to neighbouring Nigeria as refugees, while some have moved to the bushes and other urban towns within the country where they think is relatively safer as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2019: 3). The alarming rate of refugees in Nigeria and the number of Internally Displaced Persons within Cameroon orchestrated the coming of the UNHCR to the Anglophone regions of Cameroon to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons. However, the UNHCR has been facing a lot of challenges in undertaking its activities on the ground due to the violence of the armed conflict and the uncooperative attitude of the belligerents.

### **Objectives of the Paper**

- 1) To review the activities of the UNHCR in the management of displaced persons in conflict zones around the world;
- 2) To assess the role of the UNHCR in the management of the displaced persons in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon;
- 3) To examine the challenges faced by the UNHCR in the management of the displaced persons in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

### **Methodology**

This paper is anchored on the qualitative research approach and made use of the case study research design. The paper made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. Secondary source of data collection consisted of books, articles in journals, newspapers, magazine and also internet search documents. With the primary source of data, the paper made use of semi-structure interviews and an interview guide was constructed for that purpose. A purposive sampling technique was adopted as sampling method in this paper.

## **The Activities of the UNHCR in the Management of Displaced Persons**

### **1) Protection**

Conceptually, protection is all activities which are intended at gaining complete respect for the rights of displaced persons in accord with the letter and spirit of the significant bodies of law. In other words, protection is perceived as an objective, a legal responsibility or an activity. It is an objective which requires full and equal respect for the right of all persons, without discrimination as provided for in national and international laws (Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2016: 2).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created at the Geneva Convention of 1951 with a prime objective to protect the millions of people who have fled from their homes due to the outbreak of armed conflicts. UNHCR has a primary mandate to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to people who have been displaced due to armed conflict and to seek permanent solutions for these groups of persons within its core mandate responsibilities. The initial mandate of the UNHCR, according to the 1951 Geneva Convention, covers only refugees, that is, all persons who have fled outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and who, as a result, require international protection. Nevertheless, over time, the UNHCR's mandate has been expanded to cover Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The first intervention of the UNHCR in protecting IDPs was far back in 1972 in Sudan (UNHCR, 2009: 158).

Protection is not restricted to survival and physical security but it also covers the complete range of rights, including civil and political rights, such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to political participation, and economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to education and health. Protection is a legal responsibility, principally of the state and its agents. In situations of armed conflict, that responsibility extends to all parties to the conflict under international humanitarian law, including armed opposition groups. Humanitarian and human rights actors on their part also play significant role as well. In particular, when states and other authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil their protection obligations, international bodies and other humanitarian bodies then come in to carry out this responsibility. Protection is an activity, which ensures that action must be taken to safeguard the enjoyment of rights of every individual. There are three types of protection activities that can be carried out concurrently. They include, responsive to prevent or stop violations of rights, remedial to ensure a remedy to violations including through access to justice and reparations and environment building to promote respect for rights and the rule of law (Aleksieieva, 2016: 12).

According to Feller (2006: 11), the UNHCR holds that protection is a responsibility, which is determined to reinstate the most basic rights to the people. Some of these rights include, but not limited to, the right to life, the right not to suffer torture or discrimination, the right to respect for one's dignity and the right for the preservation of one's family. Protection is the aspect of creating a conducive atmosphere which will enable that these rights and other have a reasonable chance of being enjoyed, pending a durable solution to the problems at issue (Feller, 2006: 11). Protection is seen as all activities which are aimed at obtaining complete respect for the rights of IDPs and refugees in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law. Protection can also be perceived as an objective, a legal responsibility, and an activity. It is an objective which requires

full and equal respect for the right of all persons, devoid of discrimination as provided for in national and international laws (Aleksieieva, 2016: 12).

Protection has stood as the major aspect of UNHCR involvement in numerous prominent operations, such as in the case of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Kosovo. In displacement caused by conflict, there are two very important needs that move simultaneously: physical security and protection, and life-sustaining assistance and basic services. Assistance without protection is doubtful to succeed in enhancing the circumstance of the victims and might even heighten their plight. Conversely, appropriate designed assistance can be an important instrument of protection. Indeed, it is significant to stress that though UNHCR has undertaken protection activities without a major assistance component in some instances, the co-relationship between the two aspects of humanitarian action should not be under-estimated. While protection will be a principal need in certain phases of displacement and may require little or minimal concurrent material assistance, in other situations it will be difficult to provide effective protection without some assistance role (UNHCR 2000: 3).

## **2) Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFIs)**

Practically, emergency transit shelter is any emergency suitable structure that is constructed for the IDPs/Refugee family of not more than seven persons with the aim to provide them with suitable place for temporary living, safety from the conflicts, enhanced resistance to ill health and diseases, protection from the hot/cold climate, protection from the dangerous animals, protection from humanity aggressions and lastly to ensure family privacy (UNHCR, 2018). Shelter is an easily assembled and mobile temporary small residence that provides protection from hot or cold climates, space requirements comply with the agreed Cluster standards and guidelines and suitable for a small family not exceeding six members. The Cluster provides emergency shelter in emergency cases to ensure rapid assistance for the IDPs and refugees. The emergency shelter is built using existing trees or vertical poles. Also, shelter can be seen as a suitable structure that is constructed for the IDPs/Refugee family of not more than seven persons with the aim to provide them with a suitable place for temporary living, safety from the conflicts, enhanced resistance to ill health and diseases, protection from the hot/cold climate, protection from the dangerous animals, protection from humanity aggressions and lastly to ensure family privacy (UNHCR, 2016: 5).

In the domain of Emergency Shelter, the UNHCR and the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), together leads the global emergency shelter cluster. The UNHCR leads the emergency cluster in a situation of displacement caused by conflict, while the IFRC on the other hand leads the emergency cluster in situation of natural disaster generated displacement. The Global Emergency Shelter Cluster Working Group action plan has the prerogative to identify priority areas where services must be upgraded. After overseeing the general leadership, the UNHCR also act directly in the field. The Emergency Shelter Cluster (ESC) has been implemented in more than ten countries, namely Chad, DRC, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Indonesia and others. In 2007, it conceived a toolkit to help country cluster coordinators fulfil their leadership responsibilities. The cluster is also developing a performance-management system to gauge the effectiveness of its operational response. Several additional tools, including the Guidelines for Climatic Variations and Shelter Options for Response in Early Recovery, are being developed (UNHCR, 2009).

According to the Feller, (2006), the UNHCR interventions on Displaced Persons, usually include shelter programs that support access to emergency shelter and/or transitional shelter, depending on stage of the operation. When humanitarian agencies refer to shelter they generally mean habitable, covered living space, providing a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity. Specific shelter modalities may seem the best option at one point, yet they can only be adequate if they reach adequate standards and allow the respective individuals or groups to live in safety and dignity. Initial conditions can deteriorate along the displacement cycle both because of the inability to maintain and improve the shelter itself or because of the interaction between groups of displaced persons as well as between these and other affected communities (TWG, 2017: 56).

### **3) Provision of Basic Needs and Essential Services**

In line with basic needs, these are essentials thing that are needed to sustain life. They consist of shelter, food, clothing, alongside household equipment. They as well include essential services provided by and for the community at large, such as good drinking water, sanitation, health and education (UNHCR, 2018).

The UNHCR programs focuses on the specific needs of displaced women, children, adolescents and ethnic minorities in conflict zones, as these are the most vulnerable groups during the process of internal displacement. The activities of the UNHCR are designed to empower and support displaced women, strengthens women's associations and provide displaced women with identification documents. The agency worked with the ministry of education to increase educational facilities for displaced children in selected areas. Their assistance to ethnic minorities concentrated on the support for minority associations that advocate respect for the cultural and property rights of displaced minorities (UNHCR, 2003: 288). The UNHCR made lots of efforts to offer displaced women with access to basic rights, providing women with the same access to state benefits as men. The UNHCR worked with some 30 organizations representing 8,000 women participating. Many of the agency activities targeted IDP women, to increase their educational and technical skills for the job market, and more than 1,000 women have actively participated in UNHCR projects (UNHCR, 2002: 455).

### **4) Leadership, Coordination and Partnerships**

Leadership coordination and partners is the ability of the agency to carry out supervisory activities over it partners and develops new partnership (WWF, 2017). According to the Geneva Convention of 1951, the UNHCR has a leadership and supervisory responsibility, which is clearly indicated in its Statute, as well as in Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and Article II of the 1967 Protocol. The leadership and supervisory responsibility entail that all Contracting States should cooperate with the UNHCR in the exercise of its responsibilities. The UNHCR is therefore competent by its Statute and international treaty law to oversee all instruments relevant for the management of IDPs. Contracting States undertake to cooperate with the UNHCR in the exercise of its functions, and about the application of the provisions of these instruments. They also agree to provide the High Commissioner with information concerning the number and condition of displaced persons, coupled with laws and regulations concerning them (Refugee Convention, 1951).

The leadership, coordination and partnership clusters enable the UNHCR to work with other agencies, international and local organizations and other actors to better manage the IDPs in

conflict zones around the world. UNHCR led 25 of the 35 activated, country-level protection clusters and other inter-agency protection coordination mechanisms worldwide. UNHCR co-led five national protection clusters with a government counterpart or a UN organization, and co-facilitated nine protection clusters with international non-governmental organizations, including the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). In working towards more coherent and integrated protection response, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) worked closely with UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), and NRC as the lead organizations responsible for child protection (UNHCR, 2017: 60).

During the Colombia crisis, the UNHCR worked hand in hand with the OCHA in spearheading the leadership cluster the joint UN Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP), which was presented by the United Nations High Commissioner to government authorities, donors, academics, inter-national agencies, and NGOs in Bogotá in November 2002. The plan included activities which were complementary to existing national efforts to assist IDPs and was endorsed by the Colombian Government. During the year, the UN agencies continued to advocate for the national IDPs legislation. Because of the continued collaboration with the Government, the UN Thematic Group on Internal Displacement and the Vice President constituted an ad hoc working group to focus on voluntary return, local integration or the relocation of IDPs (UNHCR, 2002: 456).

### **The Role of the UNHCR in the Management of the Displaced Persons in Anglophone Regions of Cameroon**

The conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, which started in 2016, has caused a host of crises, one of which is the high number of displaced persons within Cameroon as IDPs and refugees in neighbouring Nigeria. Since 2016, the socio-political crisis, which morphed into a full-blown armed conflict in 2017, exacerbated by sporadic violence by government forces and armed separatists, has negatively affected the civilian population in the Anglophone regions very badly to the extent of a humanitarian disaster. According to Tande and Molua (2021), the violence and human rights violations in the Anglophone regions due to the armed conflict in those two regions produced an unprecedented number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, which, according to humanitarian experts, is on the scale of a humanitarian crisis. From the onset of the armed conflict, the Cameroonian government was in denial of the existence of a humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone regions and as such disputed the number of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees advanced by human rights and humanitarian organizations and did almost nothing to assist them. However, by March 2021, UNOCHA reported a total number of 705,000 Internally Displaced Persons and 63,235 refugees in Nigeria (Tande and Molua, 2021). Meanwhile, as the armed conflict and violence continued, the number of displaced persons kept increasing exponentially.

This necessitated the intervention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected population of those two conflict-torn regions who fled from the armed conflict and violence to seek refuge as IDPs in other parts of Cameroon and refugees in Nigeria. Tande and Molua (2021), states that the Internally Displaced Persons living in the country found refuge in the bushes and relatively secured localities in the Anglophone regions and in some communities in the Francophone regions. Those living in the bushes who were essentially women, children and elderly persons were exposed to all types of difficulties and dangers. Regarding the plight of Anglophone refugees in Nigeria, it should be

noted that as soon as the first flow of refugees started moving towards Nigeria, the Nigerian government and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs immediately set up refugee camps to accommodate them. The first refugee camps were set up in neighbouring localities in Ogoja and Calabar, however, with the continued exponential influx of refugees in Nigeria; other refugee camps were set up in other localities across the country.

From the outbreak of the armed conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, international humanitarian groups played a significant role in aiding the hundreds of thousands of people displaced internally and externally. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, the United Nations declared a humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and started organizing aid. Through the declaration, the United Nations assumed responsibility for the safety of civilians (Pan African Visions, 2018). In this light, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) became involved in the conflict-torn Anglophone regions to address the looming humanitarian crisis in those regions by providing humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons. In a nutshell, the UNHCR engaged in four main domains in managing the displaced persons from the Anglophone North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The four main canopy to which the activities of the UNHCR lied are: protection, provision of emergency shelters and non-food items, provision of basic needs and essential services and lastly leadership, coordination and partnerships with other humanitarian organizations.

Protection is one of the core activities by the UNHCR in managing the IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The UNHCR is the agency which is charge in controlling and coordinating protection cluster intervention for the IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. They control and educate other organizations in the regions as far as protection of the IDPs is concerned. The UNHCR work hard to improve on the civil-military relations in the areas to protect the IDPs in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The agency addressed specific protection risks of the most vulnerable IDPs and refugees via preventive measures, remedial actions and solutions and establishing a protection mechanism to identify, trace, refer and provide services to IDPs and refugees at risk, including those who have survived human rights violations.

In terms of protection, the UNHCR worked very hard to protect the IDPs and refugees from the crisis in many ways, especially by leading the protection cluster. The UNHCR carried out protection monitoring in partnership with other organizations. In cases like SGBV, the UNHCR followed the legal procedure to prosecute the perpetrators and referred the victims to the rightful channel for medical attentions. The UNHCR also provided responds to SGBV through varieties of responses. They strengthened the community to respond to GBV cases, provided cash assistance to survivors, and provided legal assistance to other cases of violation such as GBV. They also provided documents such as ID and birth certificates to IDPs. The UNHCR equally conducted protection monitoring. This means documenting and analyzing cases of human right abuses. The UNHCR has also been providing protection to refugees in Nigeria.

The provision of Emergency Transit Shelters (ETC) and Non-Food Items is another area that the UNHCR activities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon seek to address. These are temporal structures built by the UNHCR with the aim to accommodate those IDPs who have fled from their homes due to an attack, so that they can get safety there for a while before returning to their various homes or look for another place where they think they want to be there. The UNHCR has built two emergency transit shelters in the South West Region. One of the centres is in Mutengene, and the

other is in Wotutu – Bonadikombo. The centre in Mutengene is empty as there are no IDPs there. On the other hand, the centre in Wotutu is very active as there are still some IDPs there. In the North West Region, the UNHCR and partners carried out a distribution of core relief items to about 353 households in Bamenda town in the North West region, reaching 2,469 individuals (UNHCR, 2020).

In terms of the provision of emergency shelters and non-food items to IDPs and refugees, presently the UNHCR have established two emergency transit shelters centres for the IDPs. These centres are in Mutengene-Ombe and Wotutu Village all in the South West Regions. The Emergency transit Shelter in Mutengene-Ombe is empty for now, but the emergency transit shelter in Wotutu Village have some IDPs there. The UNHCR alongside her partner organization have distributed some shelter kits in Meme and Manyu Divisions of the South West Region of Cameroon. Some of the partner organization such as Plan International, INTERSOS and its local NGO partners, Authentique Memorial Empowerment Foundation (AMEF) carried out distribution activities within communities and their locations selected, based on need and accessibility. In the case of refugees, the UNHCR worked with other United Nations organizations and the Nigerian government to set up refugee camps to host the refugees. They also provided shelters and other emergency items to the refugees.

The provision of Basic Needs and Essential Services is an important area of the UNHCR activities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The UNHCR's activities under this cluster did focus on: evaluating the feasibility of establishing a common cash platform open to all agencies to support coordinated distribution of assistance. Support WFP in taking the lead in coordinating logistics, supply and distribution of any in-kind food assistance to affected communities in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The UNHCR donates basic need items like blankets, buckets, mattresses, kettles, and some other stuff to the IDPs and refugees.

The UNHCR worked with the Norwegian Refugee Council through its partners, Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD) and the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), in the distribution of about 575 packs comprising of emergency shelter items, household and kitchen items, as well as hygiene items in Bali in the Mezam division, and Oku and Noni in the Bui division reaching out to 3,242 individuals (OCHA, 2020: 7). The Community Health and Social Development for Cameroon (COHESODEC) on its part distributed 212 emergency shelter kits in Bambui, Big Babanki, Small Babanki and Sabga villages in Tubah subdivision reaching out to 1,272 individuals (OCHA, 2020: 7). Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS) organization continued to provide 41 students with accommodation subsidies. In the South West region, Plan International distributed 70 emergency shelter kits in Wotutu village in the Buea sub-division. Danish Refugee Council distributed 2,035 emergency shelter kits in the Tiko and Mbonge sub-divisions. NRC through partners Authentique Memorial Foundation (AMEF) and Food and Rural Development Foundation (FORUDEF) distributed 1,000 packs comprising of temporary shelter kits, household, and kitchen items in Matoh town and Matoh Butu in the Konye sub-division, and Asum and Eshobi in the Manyu division, reaching out to 7,878 individuals (OCHA, 2020).

In terms of the provision of basic needs and essential services to the IDPs and refugees, the UNHCR provided shelter kits, emergency shelter kits, and transitional shelters and provided non-food items like kitchen sets, jirikans, mattresses, blankets, sola lamps, sleeping materials and others. For essential services the UNHCR focused on people with specific needs like the physically challenged person by giving them a specific package regarding their diverse challenges that suit



their own kinds of needs. The agency also gave us mats, blankets, buckets, pots, plates, containers, soap, and solar lamp to IDPs and refugees.

In the domain of leadership, coordination and partnership, the UNHCR has been engaging with and facilitating capacity building workshops for NGO partner staff to support their efforts to better address and respond to the protection and material needs of IDPs, refugees and the affected communities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The UNHCR held weekly meetings between UNHCR, INTERSOS and the African Initiative for Relief Development (AIRD) to ensure greater coordination and the timely response in the provision of assistance to the IDPs in Anglophone Cameroon. Under the Leadership Cluster, the UNHCR collaborates with the government of Cameroon, which led the overall coordination at national level through the Minister of Territorial Administration and Governors at the local level of the North West and South West Regions. The UNHCR worked in partnership with UN entities, international and local NGOs and other actors, including the government, to ensure that protection and humanitarian assistance are provided to affected populations in a coordinated manner, while working to ensure common cash facility is available for all actors.

In terms of leadership, coordination and partnerships with other humanitarian organizations, the UNHCR worked with other international and national organizations in the field. There are organizations that are in the protection cluster which the UNHCR is leading the cluster. The UNHCR worked with the United Nations specialized agencies and with international organizations such as INTERSOS, the African Initiative for Relief Development (AIRD), Norwegian Refugees Council (NRC), the World Food Program (WFP) and many others to aid Anglophone IDPs and refugees. The UNHCR also partnered with local humanitarian and human rights agencies such as the AYAH Foundation, CHRDA, RHEDAC and many others within Cameroon and Nigeria. All this was done under the coordination of the Cameroonian and Nigerian governments.

### **The Challenges Faced by the UNHCR in the Management of the Displaced Persons in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon**

There are several challenges associated with the management of IDPs and refugees in the Anglophone regions Cameroon by the UNHCR. Inadequate funding, insecurity, humanitarian access to the conflict zone and data collection are the four main factors seriously clogging the wheels of the agency to effectively carry out its mandate in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Among these challenges faced by the UNHCR in managing IDPs and refugees in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, funding appeared to be the most critical among the challenges. Another aspect which follows suit is the increasing insecurity in some communities in the North West and the South West Regions, which makes movement impossible for the UNHCR's staff.

The agency faced challenges with the aspects of finance because the funding they get from donors in managing the IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon are insufficient, making things difficult for the agency to adequately address the needs of the IDPs and refugees. Even though the UNHCR is the main agency in charge of the management of IDPs and refugees, they get their funds mainly through international aid and donations. The funding they get is often insufficient to meet the increasing needs of IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Inadequate funding results in deficiency of the UNHCR's activities, especially in manpower, commodities, infrastructure, equipment and mobility, which greatly hinders the level of success recorded by the agency in managing the IDPs in Cameroon and refugees in Nigeria.

Inadequate funding is a major challenge faced by the UNHCR in managing the displaced person in Anglophone Cameroon. Nearly all the active management agencies in Anglophone Cameroon depend mostly on international aid and donations. Only few can boast of self-generated revenue. Even the UNHCR, which is the chief agency in managing the displaced persons in Anglophone Cameroon also complained of financial constraints and unveiled the level of heaviness of the burden of managing the displaced persons despite the financial and substantial assistance it gets from other local and international organizations (UNHCR, 2021). The situation in Anglophone Cameroon is in total contrast to the agency activities in Colombia. The Agency had full funding expected in managing the situation in Colombia very early enough. This enabled the UNHCR to adequately address the situation of displaced persons without any financial disturbances. Thus, it is worrisome for the agency to talk about inadequate funding in managing the displaced persons in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

The security condition continues to deteriorate in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Attacks on humanitarian supplies, civilians and personnel continues to rise unabated. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2019, an armed group attacked the ambulance of the Archdiocese of Bamenda at Akum in Mezam Division. This follows with yet another attack on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2019, when Non-State Armed Group (NSAG) burnt a truck carrying WFP's aid supplies in Bambili, Mezam Division. The NSAGs kidnapped three female students from the Catholic School at Ngongham, while they were heading to school. The government forces on their part continue to carry out attacks against civilians and burning down of villages alongside looting people's property (OCHA, 2020). The Humanitarian actors who are in the field continued to operate under very high volatile security conditions.

Also, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, a video circulated on social media showing armed persons distributing World Food Programme (WFP) rice bags (partner agency), reportedly seized earlier from a distribution site in Munyenge village in Muyuka subdivision. Still, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, armed men attacked a United Nations (UN) convoy in Ikata village, 41 km from Buea, in the South West region of Cameroon. The convoy, which included two vehicles with seven staff members, was conducting a monitoring mission to Munyenge village in the South West region. The mission was immediately aborted, and the team returned safely to Buea, but the two vehicles were severely damaged. This attack on a UN convoy was the first of its kind in the Anglophone regions (OCHA, 2021: 3). The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) (2016), reports that the protection of humanitarian actions from attack is an increasingly critical challenge for the humanitarian sector. While available data indicate that global incidents of violence against aid workers reached a peak in 2018. Concern over threats and violence against humanitarian practitioners has continued to grow in recent years as agencies internalized this new operational reality. In the process, organizations in the field are confronted with mounting tensions as they seek to maintain access to population in need while simultaneously ensuring the safety and security of their staff in complex environment (Bangerter, 2010).

However, the aspect of security should not be a major challenge to the UNHCR in managing the IDPs and refugee crises in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. Due to their experiences in dealing with displaced persons in armed conflict like is Colombia, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and other conflict zones, the agency ought to have mastered the concept on how best to mitigate violence during armed conflict so that they can adequately address the needs of the displaced persons. Concurring to this is the beautiful work by Lucchi (2013: 5), about humanitarian intervention in situation of urban violence in which she orates that "humanitarian organizations

have worked for decades in places caught with armed conflicts such as Beirut, Colombia, Grozny, Huambo, Jaffna, Kabul, Njamena, and Sarajevo, thus they ought to have been vest on the various methods and strategies to use when intervening with humanitarian response into conflict zones”.

Humanitarian access remains a major challenge in the two Anglophone regions and as such, the UNHCR worked with its partners to improve access to the various challenging areas. In both regions, the UNHCR engaged partners through the established access working groups in analyzing the various access constraints experienced and developed approaches to influence the behaviour of the parties to the conflict obstructing access in the field. Getting access to some of the communities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon was one of the main factors that hinder the effectiveness of the UNHCR in reaching out to the IDPs in those areas. These communities have a very challenging topology, which contributes immensely to the ineffective management of IDPs in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The most significant area where this is felt is in road networks. Many of the roads within the interior are earth roads, which makes movement very difficult for the agency to meet the IDPs. The situation is similar in Nigeria where there is a significant number of Anglophone refugees. Many locked down imposed by the NSAG within the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon also greatly affected the activities of the UNHCR in those regions.

Another challenge clogging the wheels of the UNHCR in adequately managing the IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon is that of data collection. Data collection appears challenging at times because of the type of difficult terrain in certain affected communities. Most at time, the IDPs are hiding in very dangerous areas, which make it very difficult to get to all of them. The number recorded at times does not really reflect the real statistics of displaced persons in the field. Data on an IDP population clearly faces the same issues as any data collection effort in humanitarian contexts. In addition to the often-limited resources available for putting together a comprehensive map of where the IDP population is and what kind of situations they are facing, both crucial steps to developing an appropriate sampling design, the challenge is increased by restrained or complete lack of access to certain areas.

Examples of such constraints include IDPs living in remote locations with poor infrastructure, such as in many parts of the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, where these obstacles make keeping a country-wide database of IDPs and other victims of conflict up-to-date challenging. The situation is similar with refugees in Nigeria most of who are shattered all over the country with no credible data to account for their real numbers and location. However, the UNHCR should be able to work with its partners and agreed on a common terminology to the IDPs and refugees from the Anglophone North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. They should be able to place a common denomination that will ease the data collection process within the conflict-torn North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of the article was to examine the role of UHNCR in managing displaced Persons in Conflict Zones, with a specific interest of the Conflict-Torn Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. Deducing from the investigation carried out from the field, the Anglophone armed conflict has caused series of crises within the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. One of which is the huge number of displaced persons. The armed conflict has caused many people to become refugees in neighbouring Nigeria and hundreds of thousands have become Internally Displaced Persons in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. This huge number of displaced persons caused by the

Anglophone armed conflict forced the UNHCR to come into the conflict to protect these groups of people. The agency entered Anglophone armed conflict with an objective to protect the vulnerable displaced persons. The activities of the UNHCR in managing the displaced persons from the Anglophone armed conflict falls within four main areas. The protection of the displaced person, the provision of basic needs and essential services, the provision of emergency shelter and non-food items, and leadership, coordination and partnership. The findings revealed that the UNHCR has carried out series of activities which are aimed to protect the displaced persons from the Anglophone armed conflict. They provide emergency shelters in Mutengene and Wututu in the South West Regions of Cameroon and in Ogoja, Calabar and other localities in Nigeria. Regarding basic need, the agency supplies, blankets, buckets, mattresses, mats, and kitchen utensils to the displaced persons. Nevertheless, despite the efforts put forth by the UNHCR in managing the displaced persons from the Anglophone armed conflict, much is still needed to be done by the or agency. The agency faced series of challenges which clocks it wheel to adequately protect the displaced group of persons. These challenges include inadequate funding's, insecurity in Anglophone Cameroon regions, humanitarian access in Anglophone Cameroon Conflict Zone and the challenges of Data collection.

## References

- Aleksieieva, I. (2016), "Legal Bases of Protection Responses to Internally Displaced Persons and Internal Displacement in Ukraine", Unpublished M.Sc. thesis.
- Bangerter, O. (2010), "Territorial Gangs and Their Consequences for Humanitarian Players", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 92, No. 878.
- Crisp, R. J. (2010), *Adapting to urban displacement*, Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly,
- Crisp, J. (2012), *Forced Displacement in Africa: Dimensions, Difficulties and Policy Directions*. Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly.
- Feller, E. (2006), "The Work of the Refugee Protection Division in the International Context".
- Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (2016), *Attacks against aid workers add complexity to disaster response training*, Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2016), "Protection in Humanitarian Action".
- László, E. L. (2018), "The Impact of Refugees on Host Countries: A Case Study of Bangladesh Under the Rohingya influx", Unpublished M.Sc.
- Lucchi, E. (2012), "Moving from the 'why' to the 'how': Reflections on Humanitarian Response in Urban Settings", *Disasters*, Vol. 36, No.1.
- Lucchi, E. (2013), *Humanitarian Interventions in Situations of Urban Violence*. London: ALNAP/ODI.
- Osagioduwa, E. (2016), "Management of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa: Comparing Nigeria and Cameroon", *African Research Review*, Vol. 10, No. 50.

Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020). “Cameroon: Situation Reports”, No. 26.

Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2021), “Cameroon: North West and South West Regions, Situation Reports”, No 29.

Pan African Visions, (2018), “Aid Starts to Trickle in for ‘Ambazonians’ as UN Declares Humanitarian Crisis in South Cameroon”, Published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2018, Accessed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2023.

Skran, C. M. (2010), *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Tande, K.E. and Molua, P.E. (2021), An Appraisal of the Predicament of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees of the Anglophone Armed Conflict in Cameroon, *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 4, No. 2.

Threat Working Group (2017), Annual Report.

United Nations General Assembly (1950), *Statute of the Office of the UNHCR. A/RES/428(V)*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2002), “Overview of Refugee Populations, New Arrivals, Durable Solutions, Asylum-Seekers and other Persons of Concern to UNHCR”.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2002), “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”, General Assembly Official Records Fifty-eighth Session Supplement No. 12 (A/58/12).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2003), “Global Refugee Trends”.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2007), “Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons”.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2008), “Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons”.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2009), *Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Person*. New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement*, New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement*, New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018), *Global trends: Force Displacement*, New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2019), *Global Trend: Forced of Displacement*, New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020), *The State of the World Refugee*, New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020), *Updates of West-Central Africa*, New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021), “Report on Cameroon; Factsheet”.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021), “Operational Data Portal”.

World Wildlife Fund (2017), “Annual Report”

© GSJ