

**Rapid Gender Analysis:  
Displacement of populations in the districts of Tokombere and Mora  
Far North Cameroon, July 2015  
Summary of the results and recommendations**



**“They are suffering from the bound-goat syndrome”**

Since the end of 2013 in the Far North Region of Cameroon a large number of people, mostly women and children, have left the Nigeria-Cameroon border area for the divisions of the Mayo Sava, Mayo Tsanaga, Diamare and the Logone and Chari. For the most part, they are from towns in the district of Kolofata and its neighboring Nigerian villages, they are of Kanouri, Mandara, Mada, Peul, Mouyeng and Haoussa ethnic origin.

Most have fled after their villages had been brutally attacked by armed groups and have been traumatized by experiencing or witnessing barbaric acts of violence and extortion. The men were systematically slaughtered, sometimes in front of their wives and children, while young men were forced into the ranks of the armed groups. In one of the host villages, there was only one young boy amidst the displaced people as the others had all been taken by the insurgents. Women and girls have also been taken as sexual slaves.

The displaced populations, coming from poor and rural communities, have arrived empty-handed. For the most part they are living with host families, are renting houses or have built temporary shelters. In order to afford the high cost of rent ( 10000 FCFA a month per room), multiple displaced families are crowded into single rooms to share the cost women and children stay in the room while men spend their time outside under trees or in public spaces such as Mosques. These living conditions are extremely difficult and characterized by promiscuity, a lack of privacy and bedding equipment as well as inadequate hygiene and sanitation infrastructure.

When the displaced people arrived, the host populations, already amongst the most vulnerable in terms of food security in the country, have shared their stored grains. However, these meagre stocks were rapidly depleted leaving both communities in need of food assistance. Pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as young children

are particularly at risk of becoming malnourished. The current food aid covers neither the needs of families nor these specific vulnerable groups.

Access to water, hygiene and sanitation is a major problem. Potable water sources are either inexistent, over-used or broken. Women and children must walk long distances over many hours to purchase potable water in bigger centres. Latrines and toilets are practically inexistent. Displaced women and children are using the latrines and toilets of neighbouring households where possible. Open defecation is a common practice amongst both the host and displaced populations with the risk of violence for women and girls who must walk into the bush or go out at night to defecate. The hygienic conditions are poor with a plethora of flies and piles of garbage visible everywhere. The rainy season will only exacerbate the situation, creating puddles of dirty water which will enable mosquitoes and other vectors of disease to multiply.

When it comes to health, the displaced people use the existing health centres in the host villages where they must pay for health services and medications. While these structures do receive support from partners they still lack the capacity to treat complicated illnesses, severe cases of malnutrition or complications related to reproductive health.

The crisis has not lead to significant visible changes in the division of labour between men and women. An exception exists within female-headed households run by widowed or divorced women who take on the double role of father and mother. Women are responsible for domestic tasks and stay at home even if they do have some income generating activities. In fact, men do not permit their wives to go out during the daytime or to the market due to a socio-cultural practice during which the suitors of the woman/girl can “steal” her. Accustomed to this seclusion, women are victims of the “bound-goat” syndrome which prevents them from going out even now that they are displaced. The men are the source of income and goods for the family, a role they are no longer able to play due to the crisis. They remain idle and dependent on humanitarian aid that is slow to arrive. A potential for change is the void left by the boys and young men who have been taken or who have disappeared as their regular tasks must be performed by other members of the family. The rapid nature of this assessment did not enable to probe deeper into this change in responsibilities.

Faced with this situation of distress, a lack of opportunities and insufficient humanitarian assistance, the displaced men, women, boys and girls as well as their hosts have a weak capacity to adapt. Bereft of better options such as the opportunity to engage in income-generating activities, they are pulled into risky behaviour including early and forced marriage for young girls to “protect” them or to reduce the burden on the family, prostitution amongst women and girls, temporary migration and temptations for boys who are at risk of being recruited by militant groups.

The needs identified by the displaced people are food, shelter, non-food items, water, hygiene and sanitation, livelihood opportunities, health and education. The following observations have arisen from the assessment:

- Needs for psycho-social support and the treatment of VBG are not clearly stated by the displaced people while they remain a priority considering the experiences as well as certain behaviours of the victims
- Food is the primary need for all groups be it men, women, girls or boys
- Shelter and non-food items are the second priority for all groups with some variants (men-shelter, women-NFIs, girls and boys-clothing)
- Access to water, hygiene and sanitation is the 3<sup>rd</sup> priority for all aside from boys who have IGA's as their 3<sup>rd</sup> priority
- Support for IGAs, training and equipment is the 4<sup>th</sup> priority for men, women and girls

For the host population, food is the primary need for all groups followed by WASH. Support for IGAs is the 3<sup>rd</sup> priority for boys, women and girls while housing is the third priority for the men due to the burden of the displaced people.

Aside from the food needs that showed no differentiation amongst the groups of men, women, girls/young women and boys/ young men interviewed for host and displaced populations, the needs in other sectors differ

based on sex and age with respect to the level of priority or specific needs. For example, only boys and girls expressed the need for education while men expressed the need for housing and the women for household items while girls and boys primarily need clothing or other toiletries.

The following recommendations have arisen from the analysis:

**For CARE**

- Coordinate with other actors such as UNWOMEN, UNICEF, and the local NGO the Association for the struggle against acts of violence to women and children, ALVF, in order to conduct an in-depth study on the psychological consequences from the violence and trauma experienced by displaced men, women, girls and boys identifying the needs and actors in this sector;
- Update the Emergency Response strategy for the Far North in order to take into account shelter and protection not yet developed but for which CARE can bring added value given the severity of the need and the current gap ;
- Train staff on VBG and sensitivity to conflict;
- Identify active local NGOs in the Far North to implement activities in order to limit exposure and reduce the security risk.

**For all humanitarian response actors:**

- Mobilize the resources required to respond to the needs of IDPs and host populations in the Mayo Sava and the other districts in the Far North where IDPs are seeking refuge. The principle actions suggested are to:
  - Identify and treat cases of VBG and psycho-social trauma among IDPs men, women, girls and boys
  - Support IDPS to access construction materials, ex: distribution of tarps, local construction materials, cash for shelter for displaced families paying particular attention to the capacities of female-headed households and cultural construction norms
  - Distribution of NFIs (mats, mattresses, mosquito nets, cooking kits, etc.)
  - Construction and rehabilitation of boreholes, latrines and toilets through a cash-for-water with vulnerable displaced people as well as cash-for-work to build the latrines, toilets and garbage dumps (men and young men) and collective hygiene activities (young men and young women/women)
  - Food assistance through cash/voucher where applicable (displaced households and vulnerable host populations) with special attention to the equitable distribution within polygamous families and a gender-sensitive market analysis;
  - Nutritional assistance targeted towards children under 5, pregnant and breastfeeding women and other vulnerable groups (elderly and people living with chronic illness);
  - Support the creation of livelihood activities for boys to prevent the risk of temptation due to the presence of displaced people who have very few resources
  - Support agriculture and pastoral activities for host populations (seeds, fertiliser, agricultural equipment and other inputs)
  - Support for IGAs for displaced women and girls (training and equipment for sewing, weaving, embroidery, grain mills, trading etc.)