

Adaptation and Survival Strategies of Internally Displaced Anglophones in the West Region of Cameroon, 2016-2022

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12040116>

Received: 22 April 2025; Accepted: 28 April 2025; Published: 19 May 2025

ABSTRACT

The socio-political conflict ravaging the North West and South West regions of Cameroon since 2016 instituted an atmosphere of insecurity due to the frequent confrontations between armed separatist groups and government security forces. Consequently, many inhabitants were kidnapped; houses burnt to ashes, schools destroyed and some civilians killed, causing the internal displacements of many Anglophones to the West Region for safety and security. Spread in different communities, they were often victims of stigmatisation. It is against this backdrop that the paper explores the various adaptation and survival strategies employed by internally displaced Anglophones to survive in the West region. To sustain this point of view, primary and secondary sources of information were consulted. The study employed the qualitative research design, which required the use of a historical analytical approach for data collection, interpretation and analysis. The data presented chronologically and thematically reveals that displaced Anglophones adopted strategies to deal with issues of habitation, health and food security. They also got involved in income-generating activities in the sectors of agriculture, trade, and transportation for survival. The finding also reveals that some AIDPs received humanitarian assistance from NGOs within the study locale. The study asserts that despite efforts made by these displaced Anglophones to adapt and survive in the region, more is required to ensure the protection of their rights and reintegration into the host communities. Conclusively, the paper calls for the creation of a National Coordination Support Program by the government to empower displaced Anglophones with income-generating activities.

Keywords: IDPs, Anglophone, Adaptation, Survival, West Region, Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

The world has become an epicentre of conflicts with a remarkable increase in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). As per the 2020 report by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there was a dual increase in global displacement rates since the outbreak of the First and Second World Wars.¹ Unlike refugees, the internally displaced citizens reside within the confinement and sovereignty of their national territory. These IDPs remain entitled to the same rights that all other persons enjoy but are among the most vulnerable people in the world today. They are forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, gross violations of human rights and other traumatic events. Once displaced, many suffer from conditions of insecurity, severe deprivation and discrimination. Despite the fact that there is an established system of international protection and assistance for persons who flee across borders, responsibility for addressing the plight of IDPs lies first and foremost with the State concerned.²

¹ Mooney, Erin, "Presence ergo Protection? UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the ICRC in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina," *International Journal of Refugee Law* V 7, No. 311 (1995): 407-435.

² Asleigh et al., "Interethnic Coexistence and Peace Setting," *International Journal Political Studies* 4, no. 3 (2005): 213-218.

The phenomenon of rising post-colonial conflicts in Africa remains a cause for concern. Over the past decades, many civil wars, genocides and the manifestation of terrorist propaganda caused many deaths and destruction of properties.³ In the 15th century, Africans had to forcefully migrate out of the continent through the auspices of the transatlantic slave trade. After the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the introduction of legitimate commerce along the coast of West Africa, some European powers rushed to the continent to acquire land in the hinterlands and to assume political, economic and social control over the African territories and her rich resource potentials.⁴ This eventually resulted in the scramble and partition of African territories among key European countries such as Britain, Germany, Portugal and Spain, strengthened by the decisions taken during the Berlin West African Conference of November 1884 to February 1885, with serious consequences for the African continent.⁵ The effect of the partition of Africa after the Second World War created tensions among African territories caused by the artificial political boundaries instituted by the Europeans. Thus, the newly born states in Africa in the 1960s were unable to deal with these conflicts, which, however, often resulted in civil wars or genocides.

The German protectorate in Cameroon existed from 1884 and ended in 1916 during the period of the First World War. After the defeat of the Germans in the territory, France and Britain partition the territory after failing to implement their concept of joint administration.⁶ The French took the greatest portion of Cameroon and implemented the policy of assimilation, while the British administered their own portion of the territory as an integral part of Nigeria and introduced the policy of indirect rule.⁷ Both territories evolved under different colonial heritage systems that shaped their political destinies during the period of the rise of indigenous nationalistic feelings spearheaded by the impacts of the Second World War. French Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo achieved independence on the 1st of January, 1960, as the Republic of Cameroon.⁸ On the 1st of October, 1961, Southern Cameroon gained its independence after a plebiscite organised on the 11th of February, 1961, by the United Nations accepting to join 'The Republic of Cameroon' over the Nigerian Federation.⁹ The reunification of British Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon saw the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon after the Founban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 and the Yaounde Tripartite Conference of August 1961.¹⁰

On the 20th of May, 1972, a referendum was conducted in which 99.97% of Cameroonians voted in favour of reunification, resulting in an end to federalism.¹¹ The abrogation of the federal system of government in Cameroon and the creation of a unitary state almost immediately led to criticisms from within the ranks of the Anglophones. In 2016, determined to defend the course of Anglophones, lawyers and teachers trade unions of the Anglophone regions staged a peaceful protest in North West and South West regions of the nation. The lawyers protest was held to express their grievances over the perceived marginalisation of the Anglophone common law practices in the country.¹² In the same spirit, the Anglophone Teachers Trade Union (ATTU) protested against the educational system in the Anglophone regions targeting the University of Buea.¹³

³ Robinson, Mary, "Human Rights, Refugee Protection and Humanitarian Action: 11-14.

⁴ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Dakar: Pambazuka Press, 2012), 60-95.

⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 60-95.

⁶ Elango, Z. Lovett. *The Anglo-French Condominium in Cameroon 1914-1916: A History of Misunderstanding*. (Limbe: Navi Publication, 1987), 23-32.

⁷ Victor J. Ngoh, *Former Southern Cameroons. The "Third Option" and the Anglophone problem, 1959-2022: A Historico-conflict study* (Limbe: Press Print, 2023), 165-200.

⁸ Achankeng, Fonkem. "The Founban constitutional talks and prior intentions of negotiating: A historico-theoretical analysis of a false negotiation and the ramifications for political developments in Cameroon." *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, and Perspective* 9, no. 2 (2015): 11.

⁹ NAB, *Press Release*, 1562 "Sca (West Cameroon) Achieves Independence by Joining the Republic of Cameroon", 7th October 1961.

¹⁰ NAB, *Press Release*, No. 1467. "All-Party Founban Conference Opens: President Ahidjo Advocates Federal Constitution." 20th July 1961.

¹¹ Konings, Piet and Nyamnjoh, Francis B., 'The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, no 2, 1997: 207-229.

¹² Cameroon Human Rights Commission, *Report of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission of 2020*, from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cameroon>, consulted on September 26, 2023.

¹³ Awasom N. F. "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon Yesterday and Today in search of a Definition." *Journal of the African Literature Association* 14, no. 2 (2020): 264-291.

However, the governments' untimely intervention saw the emergence of many separatist groups advocating for the creation of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia. These groups took up arms to defend their objectives, leading to frequent confrontation between armed separatists and government security forces, bringing an atmosphere of insecurity to the North West and South West regions of the nation, causing the internal displacements of many Anglophones to the West Region. Spread in different communities, they were often victims of stigmatisation. It is against this backdrop that the paper sets out to examine the various adaptation and survival strategies employed by AIDPs to endure life in the West region.

The point of departure of this paper is that while a good number of studies have been conducted in Cameroon and beyond on the situation of AIDPs, none has been focused on their adaptation and survival strategies in the West Region. Hence, this study is designed to void that gap by bringing to lamplight the various strategies that were instituted by AIDPs to cope with life in the region.

Theoretical and Conceptual Clarification

In order to realise this study, the Human Needs Theory¹⁴ was used. This theory was propounded by Coate and Rosati in 1988. The basic fundamental assumption of this theory is that human needs remain an indisputable source in the influence and explanation of human behaviour and social interactions. This theory in its applicability to the study explains the various needs of the AIDPs in the West Region, which warranted the institution of survival strategies aimed at ameliorating their living in the region. Therefore, in this capacity, the theory examines a plethora of AIDPs needs and the successive actions they undertook for the improvement of their wellbeing in the West region.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Scholars over the years have made significant effort to bring to the fore a definite definition of internally displaced persons. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IDPs are citizens or long-term residents of their country uprooted from their homes due to armed conflicts or political instability but stay within the confinements of their national territory.¹⁵ Lee Luke further explains why IDPs are not refugees. Refugees by definition are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence. In other respects, however, both categories of displaced persons often face similar risks and deprivations.¹⁶ Salama P. Spiegel and R. Brennan noted that the group of IDPs who migrate to other places do so unwillingly; hence, they can be categorised under the term forced displacement. The fact that the plight and welfare of the IDPs are not adequately treated and the same respects, like the well-being of the refugees, remain contentious.¹⁷

An Anglophone

According to Ngoh, the indigenous peoples and their offspring of the territory entrusted to Britain after the defeat of the Germans and the partition of Cameroon are *de jure* and *de facto* Anglophones regardless of the fact that they spoke English or not or grew up in the Anglo-Saxon culture. These are the ethnic groups in the present-day North West and South West regions of Cameroon. The children of indigenes from the French-speaking sector of Cameroon who married an indigene from any part of former British Southern Cameroons were Anglophones.¹⁸ In the same light, Anyefru Emmanuel noted that according to Nfi, an Anglophone in Cameroon is not just someone who speaks English; not just someone whose parents lived in the former British Southern Cameroons; not just someone who had acquired Anglophone education or culture but precisely

¹⁴ Jerel A. Rosati, David J. Carroll and Roger, *Critical Assessment of the Power of Human Needs in World Society* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988), 156-167.

¹⁵ Mooney, Erin "Presence ergo Protection? UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the ICRC in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina", *International Journal of Refugee Law* 7, No. 311 (1995): 407-435.

¹⁶ Lee, Luke T. "The London Declaration of International Law Principles on Internally Displaced Persons", *American Journal of International Law* 95, no 2 (2001): 454-458.

¹⁷ Salama P. Spiegel and R. Brennan (2001) 'No Less Vulnerable: The Internally Displaced in Humanitarian Emergencies', *Lancet (London, England)* 357(9266): 1430-1431.

¹⁸ Victor J. Ngoh, *Former Southern Cameroons. The "Third Option" and the Anglophone Problem, 1959-2022: A Historico-Conflict Study* (Limbe: Press Print, 2023), 180-181.

someone whose ancestry was Southern Cameroonian.¹⁹ Bobda also clearly indicated that the term Anglophone, as it is understood in Cameroon, has mostly an ethnic connotation. It has very little to do with knowledge of the English language, as an Anglophone in the Cameroonian sense does not need to know a word of English. This definition is more relevant because in Cameroon, the concept Anglophone is more ethnic, cultural and regional than linguistic. Anglophones are those Cameroonians whose ancestral origins and ethnic bases are in the former British territory of the Southern Cameroons, whether they speak the English language or not. The term is therefore exclusionary and limited to people of a defined territory, culture and history.²⁰

Adaptation Strategies

The strength and dynamism instituted by the AIDPs in the various communities of the West region to survive could not be underestimated. Every AIDP household employed coping strategies of varying capacities when confronted with major obstacles or any shocks. They employed strategies to cope with habitation, food security and health.

Habitation Strategies

One of the eminent needs of AIDPs in the West region was habitation. Every AIDP household employed coping strategies on where to stay and carry out their daily preoccupations. The AIDPs in the region identified nine habitation coping strategies. Their responses to questions on habitation coping strategies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency application of habitation coping strategies of AIDPs in the West Region

Coping strategy	Frequency (50)	Percentage (100%)
Put the mattress on the floor	46	92
Use double beds	46	92
Live in the outskirt	26	52
Beg for houses	26	52
Rent a house	42	84
Stay with family members	06	12
Stay in a house for free	06	12
Owned your own house	03	06
Receive help from NGO	26	52

Source: Computed by the author from field data, January, 2025.

From Table 1 above, out of fifty informants' interviewed, it was found out that 92 % of the respondents (46 of the 50 respondents) said they usually put the mattress on the floor to cope with their highly dependent population. More so, 92 % of the respondents use double beds as a remedy for sleeping space. 52% of them live in the outskirts, where houses were relatively cheaper. 52 % of the respondents said they begged for houses since they could not afford them; 84 % rent houses, and 12 % stay with family members. 12 % stayed in a house for free, while only 6% actually owned houses. Finally, 52 % of the IDPs received household help from NGOs.

Food Security Strategies

The need for food security to sustain their livelihoods was one of the greatest challenges facing AIDPs in the West region. Thus, in the face of such challenges, adaptation and coping strategies were employed by these displaced Anglophones to cope with life. The table below summarises the food security coping strategies employed by the IDPs in the West Region.

¹⁹ P. Konings and F.B. Nyamnjoh, "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", 207-229.

²⁰ Anyefru, Emmanuel, "Paradoxes of Internationalisation of the Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28 no 1 (2010): 85-101.

Table 2. Frequency application of food security coping strategies.

Cooping Strategy	Frequency (50)	Percentage (100%)
Relied on less expensive food	46	92
Reduced the quantity of food consumed	46	92
Reduce number of meals eaten in a day	50	100
Rely on help from friends and relatives	26	52
Sent household members to eat elsewhere	14	28
Consume seed held for next season planting	26	52
Restrict consumption by adults for small children to eat	42	84
Send households members to beg	06	12
Stay for the whole day without eating	18	36
Receive help from NGO	26	52

Source: Computed by the author from field data, January, 2025.

The most prevalent coping strategies were identified through an interview with 50 AIDPs in the region, mostly those who had families to cater for. Nine consumption (food security) coping strategies used to moderate the effect of food shortages were identified as shown in Table 2 above. Based on the interview, the study revealed that 92% of the respondents (46 of the 50) sometimes applied the strategy of purchasing less expensive foods. More so, 92% of the respondents use the strategy of reducing the quantity of food consumed per meal. All the respondents used the strategy of reducing the number of meals eaten in a day (100%). It was also found that 26 of the respondents (52%) rely on help from a friend and relative. More so, only 14 of the respondents sent household members to eat elsewhere apart from home. In addition, 26 respondents consumed food held for the next season. Furthermore, 42 (84%) of the respondents restricted adults' consumption for small children to eat. Only 6 of the respondents send household members to beg to sustain the family. Finally, only 18 of them went out the entire day without eating. They said this was only occasionally. Only 52% of the targeted AIDPs interviewed received humanitarian aid from NGOs.

Health Strategies

Health being a priority as it is often stated was also very significant as far as the living conditions of AIDPs in the region were concerned. Coinciding with the habitation and food challenges, the AIDPs in the region also face health challenges. They identified four health coping strategies, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 3. Frequency application of health coping strategies

Coping Strategy	Frequency (50)	Percentage (100%)
Prepare herbs when sick	46	92
Buy drugs from local pharmacy	46	92
Go to the hospital when sick	06	12
Stay at home when sick	40	80
Done your HIV screening	08	16
Use mosquito nets	07	14
Don't have mosquito nets	45	90
Boil water before drinking	25	50
Live with a handicapped	05	10
Receive help from NGO	25	50

Source: Computed by the author from field data, January, 2025.

From Table 4 above, 46 (92%) of the respondents usually prepared herbs and drank to regain their health status. More so, 46 of the respondents (92%) bought drugs from local pharmacies, while only 6 respondents (12 %) went to the hospital whenever they were sick. Many preferred local pharmacies to hospitals since they

spent little or nothing to consult without perfecting laboratory tests. Only 08 (16 %) of the correspondents did HIV screening, 07 (14 %) use mosquito nets, while 45 (90 %) don't have them. 25 (50 %) of the respondents boiled water before drinking. The boiling of water before drinking helps remedy diseases like typhoid and malaria, among others, as an IDP proclaimed that "prevention is better than cure... I prefer to boil my water rather than become ill with typhoid and malaria."²¹ Finally, only 25 (50%) of the respondents received humanitarian aid.

Survival Strategies

Many AIDPs in the West region were involved in income-generating activities such as trading, transportation, engagement in public services and agricultural practices as a means to survive in the region. As dynamic as they were, their skills and ingenuity were manifested in these domains as a means of raising income to take care of their needs. Table 3 reveals the statistical analysis of the number of AIDPs that were involved in the main economic activities in the West region.

Table 3: Statistics on income generating activities

Type of Activity	Number of AIDPs Involved
Trading	Over 800
Transportation service	Over 900
Engagement in Public Services	Over 500
Agricultural activities	Over 1000

Source: Computed by the author from field data, January, 2025.

Statistically, over 800 AIDPs were involved in trading activities in the region.²² These were mostly Anglophones who left their troubled regions as traders. Others learnt trading while in the region as a means to survive.²³ Some had good knowledge of the management of commercial operations, which made them succeed. They operated all forms of business transactions just to earn a living in the land. Some owned small shops and business spots along major roads in the markets of Fouban, Foubot, Dschang, Bafoussam and Mbouda.²⁴ Their survival was therefore tied to their ability to outsmart others in business. Judith Yenla, a businesswoman in Fouban, revealed that every day she went to the market with market gardening crops to sell. She had engaged in the business since 2016, and because of that, she was able to feed her family.²⁵ Another informant in Mbouda revealed that she cooked beans and *puff-puff* every morning and evening to satisfy her customers, which enabled her to own a restaurant at the Fouban main market.²⁶ Thanks to their involvement in these business activities, they were able to cope and survive in the region.

Also, over 500 AIDPs in the West Region got engaged in the public services, with a majority working in the private sector. Within the private sector, a majority of these workers were teachers of nursery, primary and secondary schools.²⁷ This was due to the fact that the crisis targeted schools, forcing many teachers and students to migrate to the West region.²⁸ Many negotiated payment on a monthly basis, while others were paid according to the number of periods actually taught per week. In some secondary schools, a period was paid at 1000 FRS, while other schools paid 800 FRS.²⁹ Some of the teachers also taught in evening schools while engaging in different activities during the day.³⁰ Thus, teaching was one of the mechanisms employed by AIDPs to survive. This was because the income they received from teaching helped them to run their families

²¹ Interview with Manases Ngie, Farmer, age 55, Foubot, 13th April, 2024.

²² Interview with The Regional Delegate for Commerce, 13th April, 2024.

²³ Interview with Mr Fokwa Fanka, Trader, Age 56, Dschang, 6th April 2024.

²⁴ Interview with Fonyuy Pius, Motorcycle Rider, Age 28, Dschang, 20th April 2024.

²⁵ Interview with Yenla Judith, Trader, Age 47, Fouban, 15th March 2024.

²⁶ Interview with Francisca Ebai, Trader, Age 45, Mbouda, 15th July, 2024.

²⁷ Interview with Amos Khan, Regional Delegation of Secondary Education, Age 45, 21st February 2024.

²⁸ Interview with Amos Khan, 21st February 2024.

²⁹ Interview with Ernestine Shey, Teacher, 43, Foubot, 2nd April, 2024.

³⁰ Interview with Ernestine Shey, 2nd April, 2024.

and equally perform several tasks in the region. Some informants revealed that some newly constructed schools came as a result of the massive influx of the Anglophone student teacher population into the region.³¹

It was also revealed statistically that over 900 AIDPs, especially men, became commercial bike riders and vehicle drivers of all categories, most especially in the towns of Bafoussam, Foumbot, Koutaba, Dschang, Mbouda and Foumban.³² This particular sector was lucrative, as it did help in the provision of basic necessities for survival. One of the informants, Vernyu Pride, posits;

I left Jakiri because of the insecurity that destabilised the entire area. I was a commercial motorcycle rider, and I came to Bafoussam in 2016. Since then, I have been working with my motorcycle transporting agricultural products from the farm to the market. This made me earn not less than seven to fifteen thousand daily. With this, I was able to feed myself and my family. I equally made sure that I saved 25% of any amount I worked for per day for the future. I live with my family in Bafoussam without any difficulty, and I now have a plot at Foumbot where I intend to construct my house in the future.³³

In the same domain, Ndi Peter, a taxi driver in Dschang, explained that as a driver, he was able to take care of his family. According to him, the members of the host communities, even though they were competitors in the sector, were collaborative. He narrated how he left Bamenda when his taxi was almost burnt down by armed separatists in Bambui. He earns almost fifteen thousand francs a day, which gives him the opportunity to send his children to school and survive in the land.³⁴ The picture below shows Yuba Fai, an AIDP commercial motorcycle rider, and his friends in front of the Foumban central mosque waiting for customers.

Picture 1: Yuba Fai (middle) commercial motorcycle rider in Foumban.



Source: Field Work Photo by reseacher, 15th April 2024.

The above picture reveals the determination of displaced Anglophones in the transportation sector to survive in the West region. Fai and his counterparts expressed their willingness and determination to serve the public and raise money to cover their daily expenditures.

³¹ Interview with Faith Kibong, housewife, age 35, Foumban, 19th April 2024.

³² Interview with the West Regional Delegate of Transport, 13th April, 2024.

³³ Interview with Vernyu Pride, motorcycle rider, age 32, Bafoussam, 12th April 2024.

³⁴ Interview with Ndi Peter, Driver, Age 42, Dschang, 15th April, 2024.

In conducting focus group discussions with AIDPs men riding motorcycles in Fouban, Bafoussam and Foubot, a majority revealed how initially it was difficult for them to reside in the region, but with the passage of time, they became used to the environment and quickly adapted to the societal operations of the region. To make sure they remained strong in the region, many grouped themselves and formed associations which brought them together.³⁵ Members of these associations meet on Sundays to commune with each other. During meeting sessions, they slaughtered fowls and ate with *fufu* corn.³⁶ Palm wine was also consumed in recognition of their rich cultural heritage. This instituted a sense of solidarity and brotherliness among AIDPs in the region. During these weekly meetings, members were mandated to save 5000 FRS, after which it was channelled to a beneficiary as *Njangi*.³⁷ This money did help the recipient to take care of his belongings as well as those of his family members.

The study also unveils that agriculture was the most popular and lucrative economic activity ventured by AIDPs as a means of survival in the region. Over 1000 AIDPs were involved in this activity.³⁸ Many were gifted and dedicated farmers and exhibited their skills in farming in most of the communities in the region, especially in Foubot and Mbouda. They farmed market gardening products such as maize, cassava, Irish potatoes, and beans, among others.³⁹ Their dynamism in agriculture diversified their potentials as they engaged in the rearing of animals, especially fowl and goats.⁴⁰ They rented lands from members of the host communities in the region and cultivated on a large scale, especially women who were engaged seriously in the cultivation of vegetables. They sold their produce in the main markets of Foubot, Mbouda and Bafoussam as well as to retailers and also exported some to towns like Yaoundé and Douala.⁴¹ This caused the women to be able to take care of themselves and their families in the region. Some women testified that in a week, they could sell vegetables amounting to about 30,000 FRS from their farms. This was an indication that AIDPs who focused on the cultivation of vegetables and tomatoes earn a lot from the business.⁴²

One informant acknowledged the fact that his desire to come to the West region was because of the soils, which were not different from that of Santa, that share a boundary with Matazin not far from Babadjou and Mbouda. According to him, the same crops that were grown in Santa before the crisis were also grown in most of the communities of the West region, especially in the villages around Mbouda.⁴³ Picture 1 depicts Laimo Ignatius, an AIDP from Nwa, and his tomato farm in Foubot.

Picture 1: Tomatoes Production in Foubot by Laimo Ignatius.



Source: Field Work Photo by author, 13th April, 2024.

³⁵ Interview with Vernyu Pride, 12th April 2023.

³⁶ Interview with the West regional delegate of transport, 13th April, 2024.

³⁷ Interview with Paul Afanui, Driver, Age 46, Bafoussam, 3rd April, 2024.

³⁸ Regional delegation of agriculture and rural development, 3rd April, 2024.

³⁹ Interview with Nku Poline, Farmer, Age 39, Foubot, 23rd Feb, 2024.

⁴⁰ Interview with Konglim Juliet, Farmer, Age 51, Foubot, 23rd Feb 2024.

⁴¹ Interview with Konglim Juliet, 23rd Feb 2024.

⁴² Idem.

⁴³ Interview with Amos Njila, Farmer, Age 55, Mbouda, 15th July, 2024.

The above tomato farm was very symbolic in sustaining the life of Laimo Ignatius and his family members. Thanks to skills and ingenuity advancing his tomato farm, he was able to provide for his basic needs and send his children and other family members to school.

Humanitarian Assistance

Since the outbreak of the Anglophone conflict and the displacement of AIDPs to the West region, NGOs played a primordial role in providing assistance in the domains of health, water and sanitation, food security, habitation and education. This was the case with NGOs like UMOJA, Value Health Africa, Give a Smile, the German GIZ and Hearts of Hope, the Red Cross, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organisation (WHO). These NGOs and their activities were very symbolic in shaping the lives of AIDPs in the region. These humanitarian gestures were immensely relevant in helping and ameliorating the hardship and difficulties of the AIDPs in the region.⁴⁴

It is noteworthy that NGOs help to provide basic human needs of the AIDPs, such as food, clothing, medication and shelter. These NGOs also negotiate and influence government policy on food security and provision of social amenities to the displaced Anglophone families. NGOs were also engaged in empowerment and educational services as well as the settlement of land disputes between the AIDPs and the members of the host communities.⁴⁵ Exemplary NGOs like UMOJA worked in collaboration with the German GIZ and the ARCUS Foundation to provide training sessions on income-generating activities to AIDPs in the region.⁴⁶ One Anglophone IDP, Fai Ferdinand from Nso, testified during an interview in Fouban;

I was fortunate to be trained by UMOJA. We were called upon to register as AIDPs. I thought it was a joke, but to my greatest surprise, we were trained for almost a week on animal production, and at the end, we were given fowls to rear. During the training sessions, they gave us food and water as well as transportation back home. Today, thanks to UMOJA, I have my small poultry farm where I keep fowls and am able to sell and take care of my children.⁴⁷

Fai's acknowledgement among others who took part in the activities and training provided by UMOJA was a clear indication to curb the sufferings facing AIDPs in the West region.

Plate 1: The Mayor of Fouban and UMOJA leaders' distributing Aid to AIDPs in Fouban.



Source: Field work photos by researcher, 20th December, 2023.

The above plate represents the Mayor of Fouban, Patricia Ndam Njoya, accompanied by delegates from UMOJA during the distribution of aid to AIDPs in the West Region. UMOJA helped AIDPs to form and

⁴⁴ Interview with Ndi Peter, 15th April, 2024.

⁴⁵ Interview with Faith Kibong, House Wife, Age 35, Fouban, 19th April 2024.

⁴⁶ Interview with Marius N, coordinator GIZ-PESOP NOUN, Njikienke, 24th June, 2024.

⁴⁷ Interview with Fai Ferdinand, Farmer, Age 56, Fouban, 15th January, 2024.

legalise Common Initiative Groups.⁴⁸ Participants who benefitted from UMOJA gestures were surveyed on a weekly basis as members of UMOJA carried out surprise visiting missions to monitor the progress of the various projects that were managed by the respective AIDPs groups in the region.⁴⁹ This study demonstrated that NGOs were immensely relevant in the work of helping and ameliorating the hardship and difficulties of the AIDPs in the West region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that despite the challenges faced by AIDPs in the West Region of Cameroon, they employed dynamic survival strategies to overcome these obstacles. They got involved in agriculture, trading, transportation and public service imperatives. These income-generating activities help AIDPs to cope with issues of habitation, food security and health challenges. The study also demonstrated that NGOs unarguably played an imperative role in ensuring that AIDPs were comfortable and their wellbeing assured. This study affirms that peace remains an indisputable priority not just for English-speaking Cameroonians but for the country as a whole. This can be achieved through a ceasefire and dialogue and would be an inevitable precondition to be met before a trajectory for growth and development is restored in the affected regions.

The study therefore recommends:

The creation of a National Coordination Support Program by the government to empower displaced Anglophones with income-generating activities. Placed under the Ministry of Territorial Administration, this independent body shall design an emergency formula concerning the methodology of intervention in crisis situations in Cameroon.

An immediate ceasefire between government forces and armed separatist groups operating in the Anglophone zones. This would create an enabling environment and further provide the necessary peace for safe and effective resumption of schools in the affected regions. The ceasefire must be effective and respected by both the government security forces and armed separatist groups. Also, a genuine dialogue between the government and leaders of the Ambazonian movement must be held with practical resolutions implemented. The national commission in charge of reconstructing the Anglophone zones should stop playing games. They should go to the field and undertake statistics on the devastations to be repaired. A census should be conducted in various divisions to evaluate the damages caused by the Anglophone crisis for reconstruction to be effective. Each AIDP who returns to his region should be identified and compensated for proper and effective integration into the society.

The leaders of the Ambazonian movement should unconditionally put an end to Monday ghost towns that have ruined the economic progress of the North West and South West Regions. Leaders of the Ambazonian movements still in detention should unconditionally be released to boost the morale of their family members as a prerequisite for sincere dialogue. This will go a long way to rekindle the already dying economic progress of these zones, which adversely affects the Gross National Product (GNP) of the nation as well as her national income viability.

There should be a combined action at all levels involving all factions to put an end to the school boycott. The reconstruction commission should begin by rebuilding schools that were destroyed as a result of the armed conflict. This particular aspect is very symbolic because in every conflict that degenerates into a crisis situation, the right to education remains an undeniable UNESCO heritage enjoyed by citizens irrespective of their status. When the educational sector remains shut down, the future generation is affected and the progress and prosperity of the nation are jeopardised.

Cameroonians living abroad should uphold the image of the nation by not just investing at home but also designing programmes that can revamp our dynamic youth with the skills and ingenuity that can stand the test of recent technological changes. The government should give a tax-free investment initiative for Cameroonians

⁴⁸ Interview with Marious N, 24th June, 2024.

⁴⁹ Interview with Gildas Boris Feuwo, 2nd April, 2024.

in the diaspora who desire to invest in Cameroon. A delegation should be sent to each embassy of Cameroon abroad for a census to be conducted in order to identify Cameroonians in the diaspora making headlines. These dynamic Cameroonians, when identified, should be encouraged to invest in Cameroon, and the government can as well subsidise their investments rather than merely voting state budgets that end in the pockets of individuals.

Traditional authorities should work in collaboration with the government to ensure the return of normalcy in their villages by denouncing persons involved in acts of violence. They should be part of the reconstruction plan by the government to ensure that it is transparently implemented to suit the interests of those in need. They should be apolitical; use their powers and respect tradition rather than pertain to political affiliations, which encourages political division among citizens in their constituencies. Palaces that were burnt down should be reconstructed, and all Anglophone traditional leaders waxing lyrical in Yaounde and Douala should be mandated to go back to their chieftaincies and preach the gospel of peace.

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