

# MCO CAMEROON: Socioeconomic living conditions of refugees in Cameroon (2022)

## Changing context

1. As of June 2022, Cameroon hosts more than 1.9 million People of Concern to UNHCR (PoC), including 936,767 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), 518,853 returnees and 474,982 refugees and asylum seekers. Most refugees in Cameroon come from the Central African Republic (CAR) and Nigeria. 73% of refugees come from CAR, while 26% are Nigerians. Nearly 7 in 10 refugees are protracted (spent more than 5 years in Cameroon). In addition, more than half of refugees in Cameroon are below 18 years old (55%) or females (52%).
2. Thanks to UNHCR's and partners' efforts, refugee primary school enrollment is encouraging; however, the transition from primary to secondary school is low. Even though it is not yet universal, 35,984 children were enrolled in primary and secondary school, out of the 124,006 of school age in the East; 13,894 in the North and Adamaoua regions out of 33,858 children of school age. However, the transition from primary to secondary school is challenging due to various socio-economic, cultural, psychological, and structural reasons. Namely, refugees lack of resources to pay secondary level entrance fees and for feeding leading to dropouts in search of livelihoods and absence of school's nearby refugees' sites. Only 1 refugee school-aged child in East, West, and Adamaoua regions and 4 refugee secondary school-age children in urban areas out of 10 are enrolled. School-age refugee boys and girls are not equally likely to be enrolled in primary school for the East, North, and Adamaoua regions and in secondary school for the East, West, and Adamaoua regions and urban areas.
3. Refugee children living in protracted households are more likely to attend primary and secondary school than those living in non-protracted households. Children living in non-protracted households are less likely to attend school than children in protracted households in Douala (55% vs 81%) and Yaoundé (74% vs 84%). Regarding secondary school, children in protracted households are about twice as likely to be enrolled as children living in non-protracted households in the urban areas of Douala (20% vs 40%) and Yaoundé (24% vs 44%). This lower attendance of children from recently arrived families compared to other families could be due to the more limited economic and financial resources of these families, who have more restricted access to jobs and are more likely to be poor.
4. A substantial number of refugee children have no birth certificate, preventing them from completing primary school or pursuing further schooling. 5 refugee children out of 10 in the East and 4 out of 10 in urban areas (Douala and Yaoundé) have no birth certificate. Refugee children without a birth certificate are less likely to complete their education and have higher dropout rates than children with a birth certificate. Refugee children with an ATLAN (Attestation Tenant lieu d'Acte de Naissance) issued by the UNHCR are 17% more likely to complete primary school than those without a birth certificate. Children with a birth certificate are 24% more likely to complete primary school and pursue further schooling than those without a birth certificate.

### Strategic objectives:

1. The Humanitarian Development Peace nexus
2. Attaining a favorable protection environment through
  - Facilitate refugees' access to the territory, registration, and documentation
3. Realizing refugees' rights to safety
  - Clean water, sanitation, and Hygiene
  - Sustainable housing and settlements
4. Empowering Communities and achieving Gender Equality
  - Self-Reliance and economic inclusion
  - Prevent gender-based violence
  - Community engagement and women's empowerment
5. Securing Solutions
  - Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration
  - Resettlement and complementary pathways
  - Local Integration and other local solutions

5. Around 40% of refugees are unemployed, with working refugees primarily engaged in services and sales activities in urban areas, while agricultural jobs and trading are more common in the East, West, and Far North regions. 40% of refugees are unemployed, and 34% of adults have not received any education. 37% of CAR refugees in the Far North region have poor or borderline food consumption (JAM, 2019). Overall, refugee households heavily rely on unstable food sources such as food assistance, humanitarian cash transfers, and gifts. Non-protracted households living outside camps are more likely to have poor or borderline food consumption than protracted households (44% vs 34%).
6. The COVID pandemic has affected refugees' livelihoods and income and worsened the alarming food insecurity situation, with 7 refugees out of 10 reporting income loss due to the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, more than 7 PoCs (refugees and IDPs) out of 10 in the Far North Region had a monthly income below the minimum wage. Although high before COVID, the food insecurity among refugees has worsened due to the COVID pandemic. Indeed, for example, CAR refugee households with only one meal a day increased from 3% before COVID to 33% throughout the COVID pandemic (UNHCR, 2021).
7. Access to adequate housing is almost inexistent, with more than half of households living in overcrowded conditions (3 + people per sleeping room) and households headed by women more often crowded than those headed by men in the Far North Region. Households widely use unimproved materials for floors, walls and roofs in the Far North. Camp-based households have fewer rooms than refugee households living outside of camps. As a result, 62% of camp-based households in the Far North region live in overcrowded conditions (3 + people per sleeping room), compared to 51% of those out of camps. Overall, households headed by women are more likely to live in overcrowded conditions (61%) than those headed by men (56%). This suggests that female-headed households are more economically vulnerable.
8. According to the WHO definitions, more than 7 refugee households in 10 in the Far North region have access to an improved drinking water source, while only 1% have access to improved sanitation. 82% of refugee households in Minawao camp and 68% living outside camps have access to improved drinking water. Only 1% have access to improved sanitation. Moreover, 2 households out of 10 in camps and 30% of refugee households share toilets with other refugee households.
9. Refugee households in the Far North region use torch for lighting and mostly rely on firewood as energy sources for cooking, emitting short-lived climate pollutants. 8 refugee households out of 10 in the Far North region use torch for lighting, while only 1 refugee households in 10 use electricity or solar. Regarding the main energy source for cooking, refugees in the Far North heavily rely on firewood. Indeed, 96% of camp-based refugee households and 99% of out-camp refugees use firewood which emits short-lived climate pollutants.

## Working together towards solutions

UNHCR will prioritise the following key areas common, considering existing frameworks and multi-stakeholder collaboration:

