United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security

Cameroon

Recovery and Resilience in the Far North Region of Cameroon: Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus through the Human Security Approach

Background information

Defined by its different cultures, ethnicities, and tribes, Cameroon is currently navigating multiple challenges including violence and displacement related to Boko Haram in the Far North, the refugee crisis in the East, the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the entire country, and political issues in various regions. The arrival of Boko Haram ten years ago brought violence and conflict to the Lake Chad Basin and led to massive internal and cross-border displacement, the destruction of livelihoods and property, and the disruption of trade and flow of food. In a region where communities are already grappling with poverty and the multidimensional consequences of climate change, the impact of these compounding crises has further degraded economic and social infrastructure, leading to a significant increase in vulnerability and insecurity.

Goals and objectives

The key objectives of the programme are to: (i) improve access to and quality of basic social services with the aim to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases; (ii) improve food security and economic inclusion of people in vulnerable situations; (iii) increase prevention, preparedness and response to risks, disasters and climate change; (iv) improve social cohesion and trust in justice mechanisms and authorities for increased and strengthened peacebuilding; and (v) enhance the capacity of local authorities to improve public spaces for increased social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and prosperity.

DURATION
June 2021 – May 2024

UN IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES
UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UN-HABITAT

OTHER KEY PARTNERS
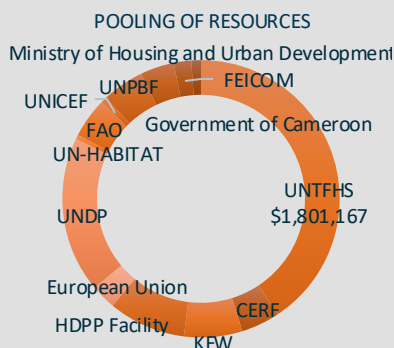FEICOM (Special Council Fund for Mutual Assistance)

BENEFICIARIES
Over 262,950

TOTAL BUDGET
US$ 4,427,969

POOLING OF RESOURCES

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
UNPBF — FEICOM
UNICEF
FAO — Government of Cameroon
UN-HABITAT
UNDP — UNTFHS $1,801,167
European Union
HDPP Facility — CERF
KFW

Beneficiaries

The programme will reach over 260,000 individuals, including women, youth, people with disabilities and municipal councillors in the Fotokol and Zamai districts, who will benefit from improved quality and access to basic services, improved food security, enhanced disaster risk management, and greater social cohesion across host, refugee and internally displaced communities.

Applying the Human Security approach

The Lake Chad Basin, including the Far North region of Cameroon, faced a complex set of challenges, ranging from humanitarian emergencies to slow-onset issues that put immense pressure on local communities and governments. To guide these communities toward sustainable development and lasting peace, the programme implemented carefully considered and integrated initiatives addressing the convergence of these challenges at the local level. Using the human security approach, the programme operationalized the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, focusing on key entry points like water and economic security to drive integrated actions that addressed critical peace and development deficits.

To support the development of an HDP nexus strategy, the programme conducted multidimensional human security analyses in the communities of Mokolo (including Zamai) and Fotokol in the Far North region. The assessments aimed to better understand the economic, environmental, food, health, water, and social challenges facing these communities, how they intersect, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these vulnerabilities. Diverse actors, including local, regional, and national stakeholders, were engaged to build local capacity for monitoring needs and vulnerabilities and to develop integrated plans that promote local development and social cohesion. The programme also established a Nexus Task Force, which brought together actors at both national and local levels to coordinate and collectively decide on the implementation of the strategy.

Given the social tensions in the region, the human security approach was essential in building trust and leveraging human interaction to address other developmental needs. For example, radio programmes on violent extremism and disaster prevention helped raise awareness, fostered understanding of shared crises, and created platforms for dialogue. Community early warning systems for disaster preparedness connected community committees and leaders, strengthening incident command systems and promoting a proactive approach to preparedness. Additionally, small infrastructure projects focused on enhancing water access and disaster preparedness brought together youth from host, refugee, and internally displaced communities to work toward shared challenges.

By adopting the human security approach, the localization of the HDP nexus was achieved, promoting collaborative action to improve socioeconomic prospects, respond more effectively to emerging risks, and create lasting social harmony in a region impacted by multiple interconnected shocks. Lessons from this initiative will inform the application of the nexus approach in other municipalities.

Achievements

- Sanitation and hygiene practices improved significantly through training provided to community health workers, who raised awareness about cholera prevention and good hygiene practices. Over 18,000 community members participated in awareness-raising events, deepening their understanding of sanitation and disease prevention.

- The programme also boosted communities' economic security by promoting horticulture, small ruminant farming, and vocational training for vulnerable groups, including youth, women, and displaced persons. Young people were further engaged through a cash-for-work programme, helping them mitigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- To strengthen resilience to climate change, the programme rehabilitated pastures and promoted improved land-use management. It also enhanced communities' preparedness for risks such as insecurity, floods, and water scarcity, increasing their ability to withstand future shocks.

- Local authorities gained vital skills in urban planning and development through the creation of Territorial Development Plans that integrate the Human Security approach. These plans aim to help local authorities accommodate population growth, improve public spaces, and foster greater social cohesion, ensuring long-term urban development.