



IMPACT REPORT

**Legal Support, Civil Documentation and GBV in
North West, South West, West and Littoral
Regions (2021-2024)**



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Executive Summary

This impact report provides an in-depth analysis of UNHCR's intervention in 415 communities in the conflict-affected Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, as well as the neighboring West and Littoral regions, implemented in partnership with RAGJ. The evaluation covers the implementation period from 2021 to 2024, utilizing both community-based and area-based approaches. Despite challenging operational conditions, the intervention yielded significant outcomes aligned with UNHCR's impact areas of 'protection' and 'empowerment,' focusing on civil documentation, legal support, gender-based violence, community engagement, and women's empowerment.

A total of 21,052 vulnerable, displaced, and marginalized individuals at risk of protection received services in the following UNHCR outcome areas:

- **Civil status, identity, and legal documentation:** From 2021 to 2024, 8,311 youth from 386 communities obtained 6,691 birth certificates, 1,150 national identity cards, and 470 disability cards. This report highlights 2024 achievements, during which 2,019 persons were assisted with 1,715 birth certificates and 304 national identity cards.
- **Safety and access to justice:** In 2023 and 2024, legal counselling and representation were provided to 10,351 persons across seven divisions in the Northwest and Southwest regions. While 10,271 received case-by-case legal advisory, 80 received legal representation and other legal services.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** In 2024, specialized gender-based violence (GBV) services were delivered to 2,390 individuals in the Boyo division, encompassing awareness-raising, psychosocial support, case management, and psycho-educational activities.
- **Community Engagement and Women Empowerment:** Activities included community participation assessments, livelihood training, protection services (cash support referrals), and UNHCR-supported community feedback and response mechanisms.

The results are further analyzed by age, gender, and diversity metrics. This includes discussions on self-help community handbooks developed and distributed within communities and notable success stories reflecting significant transformations experienced by individuals.

The key lessons from this intervention include:

- Applying humanitarian principles facilitates collaboration with diverse stakeholders.
- Enhanced legal literacy empowers people to assert their rights and responsibilities, demystifies legal concepts, and dispels misconceptions about legal processes.
- Individuals must understand the consequences of providing false information so that they can protect their lives and livelihoods.
- Livelihood and cash support are critical aspects of protection servicing.
- Survivor-centered legal servicing must incorporate psychosocial support and a long-term commitment.
- Communities need to explore alternative avenues for achieving justice, establish protective measures for victims of rights violations, and create reporting mechanisms for GBV.
- Actively involving men and boys in GBV prevention and mitigation activities has been shown to decrease harmful traditional practices against women and girls.

Purpose, Scope and Framework of Analysis

This report presents a microscopic analysis of UNHCR's intervention in Cameroon's conflict-affected Northwest, Southwest, and neighboring West and Littoral regions, implemented in partnership with RAGJ from 2021 to 2024. The outcomes described in this report highlight contributions to UNHCR Multi-Year and Multi-Partner Strategy 2022-2026 through support provided to internally displaced persons, returnees, host community members, and returnees forced to flee from their communities due to socio-political constraints.

UNHCR Impact Areas

Protect: Attaining a favorable protection environment through changes in the enjoyment of rights of forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

- **Access to territory, registration and documentation:** Forced displaced persons are registered and supported to obtain civil status, identity, or legal documentation.
- **Safety and access to justice:** Refugees and IDPs in need of legal assistance and/or representation are supported.
- **Gender-based violence:** Stakeholders involved in the fight against GBV are adequately trained to prevent, mitigate, and respond to GBV risks and take action accordingly.

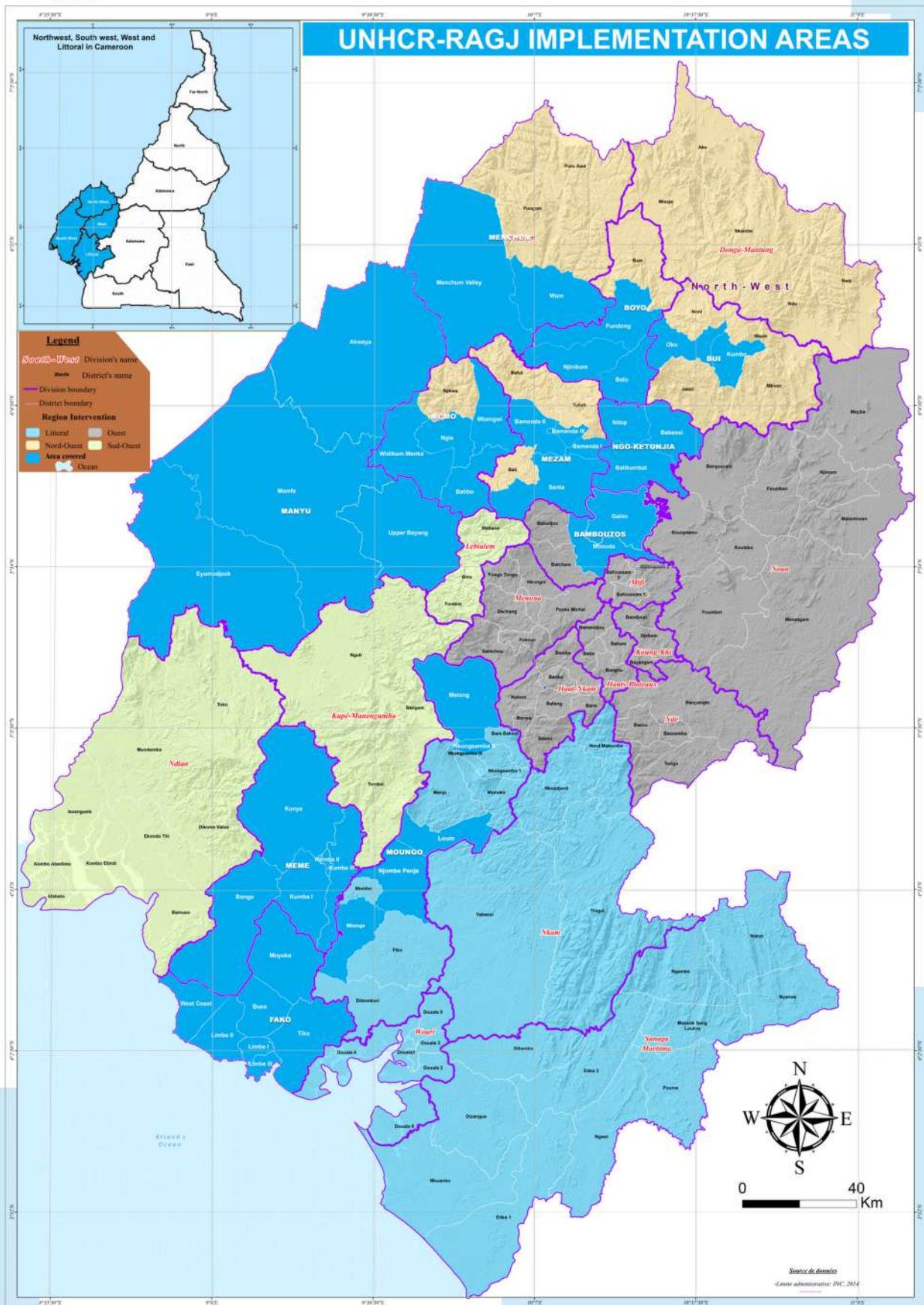
Empower: Empower communities and achieve gender equality through changes in protection and solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons due to community empowerment, strengthened gender equality, and increased livelihood opportunities.

- **Community engagement and women's empowerment:** Community-based protection committees and working groups are established and efficient.

Methodology

This report's analysis uses hybrid processes, including quantitative (time series analysis, performance indicator targets, interviews, etc.) and qualitative (content analysis, context and security analysis, stakeholder feedback, data mining, etc.) approaches. A PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental) analytical approach was also applied in the impact analysis to examine how strategic issues affect the operational context.





Strategic Communities

Since 2021, UNHCR-RAGJ has been actively engaged at the grassroots level, empowering communities and broadening its outreach year after year by providing a wide range of essential services. Through initiatives focused on legal support, civil documentation, and addressing gender-based violence, UNHCR-RAGJ has effectively utilized the ABCD approach to foster sustainable change within these vulnerable populations.

415+
Communities

The goal of this project is to create a resilient community where individuals have access to critical legal resources and civil documentation, ensuring their rights are protected and their voices are heard. By addressing gender-based violence and promoting awareness, we aim to cultivate an environment of safety and equality, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being and empowerment of affected individuals. Through our commitment to sustainability, we envision a future where communities thrive independently and can advocate for their own needs.

WHERE WE WORKED

Percentages Covered per region of intervention

Northwest Region



Southwest Region



West Region



Littoral Region



Mezam, Momo, Menchum,
Boyo, Ngoketunjia, Bui



Fako, Meme, Manyu



Bamboutus, Menoua, Mifi
Noun



Moungo

188

160

44

41

Resiliency in Navigating a Complex Operational Context

Volatile conflict and political instability: Using robust risk management protocols and security assessments, secure communication channels were established with communities to overcome unpredictable access restrictions on humanitarian workers. Whereas increasing trends in criminality, illegal taxes, arbitrary arrests/detention, threats, ultimatums, abduction for ransoms, threats to lives, abductions and extra-judicial killings, repressive actions on civilians, frequent violent confrontations (using improvised explosive devices, guns, etc.) between the state security forces (SSF) and non-state armed groups (NSAG) often lead to the killing of civilians. Also, frequent strikes, protests, ad hoc movement restrictions, prolonged lockdowns, multiple curfews, and various bans (e.g., on items with the Cameroon national



flag, national identity cards, school uniforms, yellow taxis, bikes, Android phones, etc.), widespread destruction of property/infrastructure, and extortion have caused fear, distress, confusion, displacements, and family separations. Inter-communal tensions linked to farmer-herder conflicts have intensified.

Community-based and area-based approaches were used to identify and thoroughly incorporate community members' needs, perspectives, and expectations in strategy development and implementation through participatory community assessments, consultations, and feedback (via SMS, messages, phone calls, or in-person). Community leaders, traditional rulers/councils, religious leaders, women leaders, youth leaders, local influencers, and other protection actors served in the Civil Documentation Committees (CDCs), Legal Support Committees (LSCs), and Community-Based Protection Committees (CBPCs) that assisted in the implementation of activities.

Access to Justice

Using mobile, on-site, and online legal aid clinics helps bridge the gap between forced persons and Justice and security services. Legal services are costly but largely unavailable in the areas where the most vulnerable populations reside. Moreover, most people are unaware of their right to access justice and legal remedies due to a limited understanding of their legal rights and a lack of information on how and where to address their issues. In some areas, bureaucratic obstacles complicate access to justice and security services. The lack of civil documentation exposes forcibly displaced persons to the risk of statelessness, making it challenging for them to integrate into new communities, move freely, access services, or find employment. Further, discriminatory traditional practices and cultural norms impede women's rights, including their rights to housing, land, and property.

Legal counseling and case-by-case consultations empowered people with legal knowledge to claim their rights. Many could understand the legal infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, administrative policies and procedures, and justice servicing, analyze their social-political realities, and devise context-suitable strategies to achieve justice.



Socioeconomic situation

Using community-based psychosocial support services were offered to persons witnessing a surge in psychosocial distress, psychological abuse, physical assaults, rape, sexual exploitation, promiscuity, prostitution, violence, and drug abuse. Gender-based violence and child protection case management strategies were used to address various issues. Adolescent girls remain vulnerable to forced marriage and sexual violence, mainly because many dropped out of school for an extended period. The rise in child labor and exploitation continued, driven by the lack of viable livelihoods that compelled parents and caregivers to send children into labor. Additionally, an increasing number of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) heightened the risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Widespread poverty and hardship, coupled with the loss or limitation of livelihoods—such as farming, jobs, and trade—and the inability to meet basic needs like food, education, health care, and housing, expose children, youth, boys, girls, women, and men to various vulnerabilities.

The needs of people in communities were tracked using vulnerability mapping, which measures age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) criteria. Priority was given to youths at risk of multiple vulnerabilities, children/youth in need of documentation to register for public exams or enroll in schools, survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities, girls and women, and persons facing multiple human rights violations and protection risks. 80% of persons supported included persons forced to flee, and 20% were host community members affected by various protection risks. Critical cases were profiled and submitted to UNHCR for cash support.

Environmental factors

Using UNHCR cars and bikes and trekking, the team could navigate challenging transportation conditions like muddy, hilly, steep, stony, and slippery roads, potholes, and dilapidated bridges that hinder access to distant, isolated, and hard-to-reach communities. Some communities could only be accessed through rivers using canoes. Additionally, water shortages, low power supply due to frequent electricity outages, restricted access to arable land, droughts, inadequate waste disposal, pollution, landslides, floods, and disease outbreaks (such as cholera) all contribute to the complex array of challenges these areas face.

Technological challenge

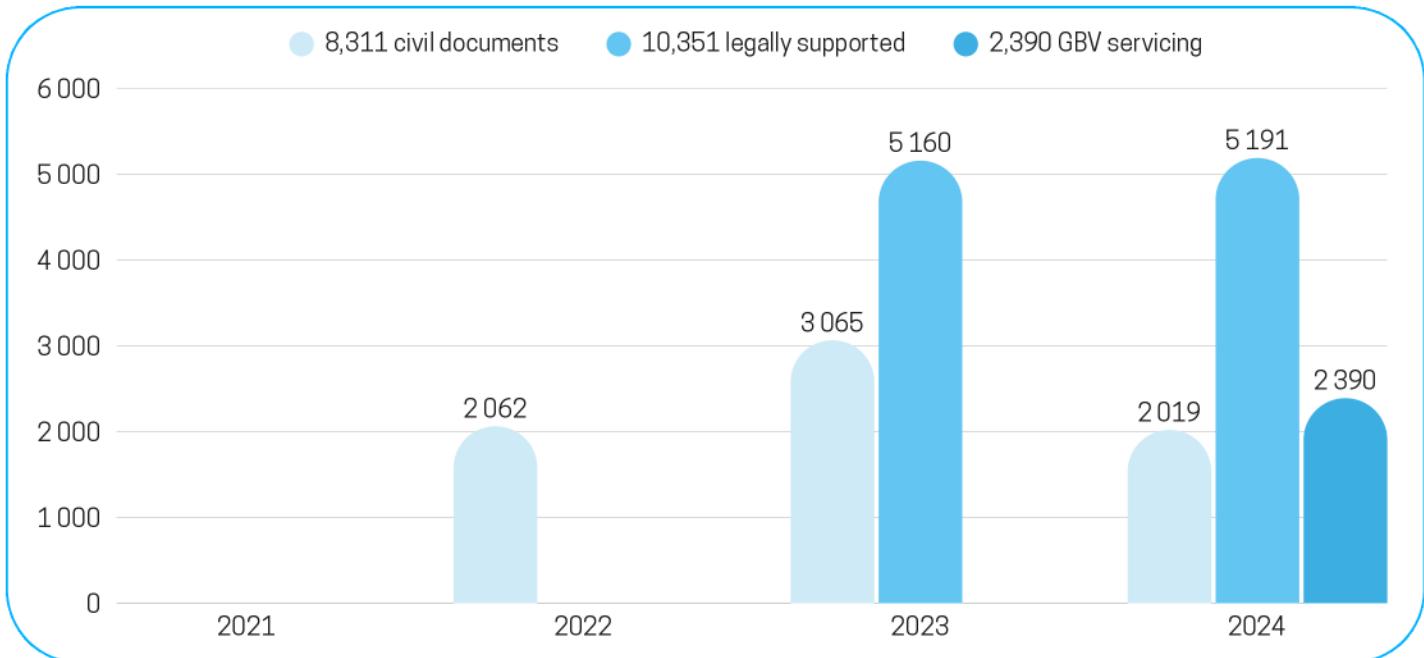
Some remote communities experience limited or non-existent phone connectivity and internet access. The team had to trek, using sticks as support to meet the people and ensure they were serviced.



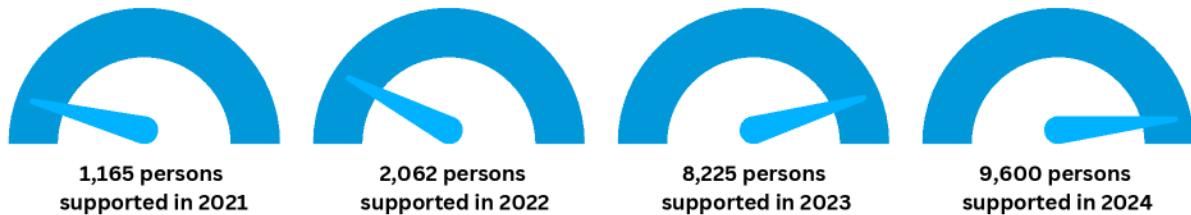
2021-2024 in Review

Significant progress has been made for 21,052 vulnerable, displaced, and marginalized individuals facing protection risks. Many have gained access to justice, security, social services, legal protection, documentation, and a better understanding of their rights, enabling them to assert their claims. Others have been liberated from harassment, arbitrary arrests, and threats, allowing them to move freely within and outside their communities. Additionally, some individuals have improved their livelihoods through jobs, trade, and farming, facilitating school registration, reducing dependency, and helping individuals and families cope with poverty and hardship. As a result, more families have achieved stability, experiencing restored dignity, increased respect, confidence, and social cohesion. Some have also relocated to safer areas, reducing their exposure to environmental risks while enjoying enhanced access to mobile phones, the internet, and information services.

UNHCR-RAGJ INTERVENTION 2021-2024



21,052 persons supported in 2021-2024



STAKEHOLDERS

Communities: Communities accepted and voluntarily organized and supported activities. Boys, girls, women, and men, including persons with disabilities and minority groups in communities, engaged in the project as beneficiaries and contributors. Community leaders, traditional rulers/councils, religious leaders, women leaders, youth leaders, local influencers, and other protection actors served in the Civil Documentation Committees (CDCs), Legal Support Committees (LSCs), and Community-Based Protection Committees (CBPCs) that assisted the implementation activities, including contributing to participatory assessments.



Public services: A strong rapport was established with the Regional Bureau of Civil Status (BUNEC), Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF), Ministry of Justice (and Penitentiary Services), Public Security, decentralized administration/councils, and other respective State institutions who underscore the trust and acceptance earned by this intervention.



UN Agencies, UNHCR Partners, and Protection Cluster members: Coordinating, including working closely with OCHA, OIM, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and other protection actors, members of the Protection Cluster, GBV, and Child Protection Area of Responsibility.



Access to Territory, Registration and Documentation

Parents, youth, adults, and communities often lack the knowledge and information needed to navigate issues, particularly those related to legal matters. Forced displacement frequently leads to the loss or destruction of personal and civil documents, such as birth certificates, national identification cards, travel passports, and academic credentials. This absence of documentation has significant repercussions for individuals and communities, including restricted freedom of movement, limited access to essential services (such as education, healthcare, and employment), difficulties enrolling in educational programs, increased exposure to harassment, arbitrary arrest, detention, bribery, and corruption, as well as the risk of statelessness. Key obstacles preventing forcibly displaced persons from obtaining their civil documents include limited knowledge of civil documentation procedures, a lack of means to cover transportation costs, delays in court processes, and a shortage of birth certificate booklets.

The insufficient support for vulnerable individuals in obtaining these essential documents places the affected population in a precarious situation. Many forcibly displaced persons have sought refuge in the neighboring West and Littoral regions without civil papers, making it challenging to integrate into these new communities, move freely, access services, or secure employment. In Moungo (Littoral), local authorities worry that these displaced individuals may never return to their original areas or compete for jobs and leadership roles within host communities. Displaced persons face harassment and extortion, and their struggles to access justice and security services are exacerbated by SSF, who often use

intimidation and threats to pressure them into returning to their places of origin.

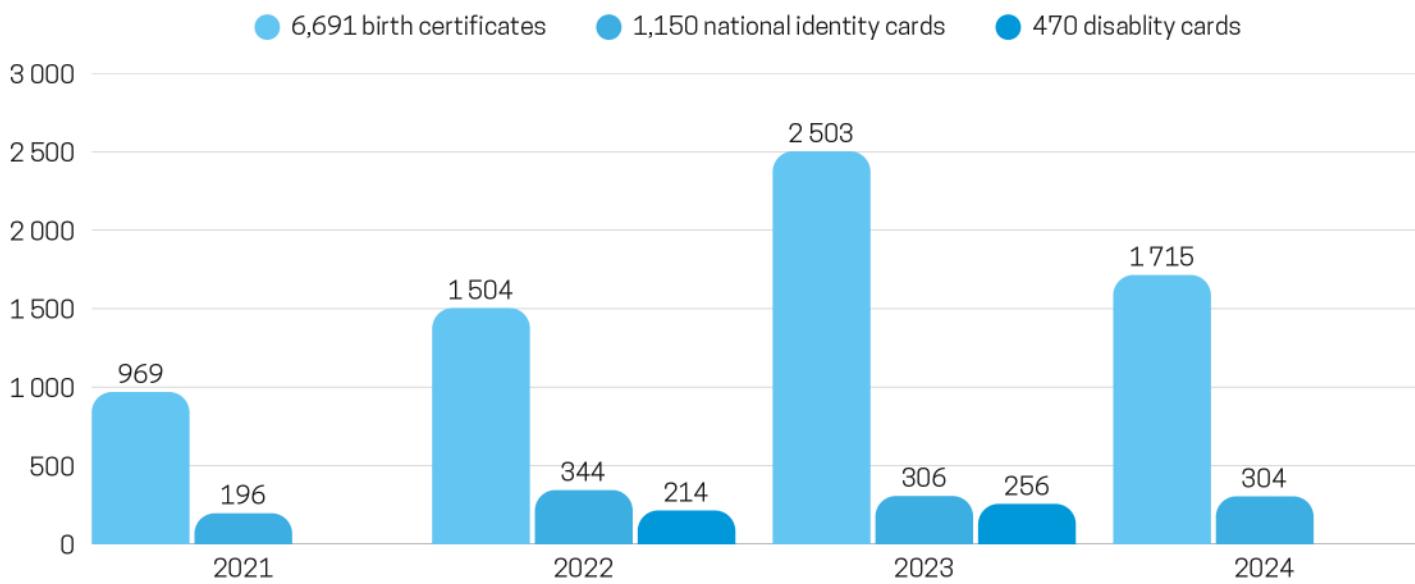
The national legal framework governing the acquisition of birth certificates, as outlined in *Law No. 2011/011 of May 6, 2011* (which amends *Ordinance No. 81/2 of June 29, 1981*, on Civil Status Organization and Related Provisions for Natural Persons), establishes procedures for birth registration within 90 days, after 90 days, and beyond six months. However, internally displaced persons (IDPs) often remain unaware of the significance of civil documentation and the cost-free option for registering their newborns within 90 days of birth, as stipulated by national law. The absence of birth certificates prevents affected individuals from accessing essential services, such as school enrolment and employment opportunities.



Since November 2014, UNHCR Cameroon has been involved in Statelessness prevention activities in line with Action 7 of UNHCR's Global Plan "Ensuring Birth Registration to Prevent Statelessness" and as part of the Global "I Belong" 2014-2024 Campaign, which aims to eradicate the risks of statelessness around the world. Cameroon Government has taken part in the Ndjamena Initiative to Eradicate Statelessness in Central Africa, held in the Chadian capital in December 2018. In addition, at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness held in Geneva on 07 October 2019, Cameroon presented its four commitments on finalizing the process leading to Cameroon's accession to the Conventions on Statelessness, the inclusion of a course on citizenship and statelessness in the training curriculum of the National School for Local Administration (NASLA), the implementation of the government's decision of March 2019 on the regularization of the marital status of persons living without birth certificates and the conduct of a qualitative study on the risks of statelessness.

In 2020, UNHCR supported the creation of the Civil Documentation Task Force, a platform of key stakeholders involved in civil documentation, including regional authorities, BUNEC, municipal councils, the judiciary, police, traditional leaders, religious leaders, international and national NGOs, and protection actors. This platform has continued to find solutions to identify challenges to accessing services and security constraints preventing progress toward obtaining civil documents.

Civil status, identity and legal documentation in 2021-2024



Civil status, identity and legal documentation

8,311 youth from 386 communities across 42 sub-divisions and 08 divisions in four regions obtained 6,691 birth certificates, 1,150 national identity cards, and 470 disability cards from 2021 to 2024. In 2023, the highest number of individuals assisted, totaling 3,065, while in 2024, experienced a slight decline with 2,019 persons supported, just below the 2,062 persons in 2022 but higher than the 1,165 individuals assisted in 2021. Most individuals receiving civil documents also benefited from psychosocial first aid (PFA) and psychosocial support (PSS).

2024 Achievements

2,019 persons were assisted with 1,715 birth certificates and 304 national identity cards. 746 were assisted in the Northwest and 647 in the Southwest, with Fako and Ngoketunjia recording the highest number of persons assisted (343 and 318, respectively) in 2024. Boyo followed by Bamboutos and Moungo divisions, had the highest number of ID card assistance (64, 50, and 50 persons respectively).

Birth certificates assistance in 2024



National identity card assistance in 2024

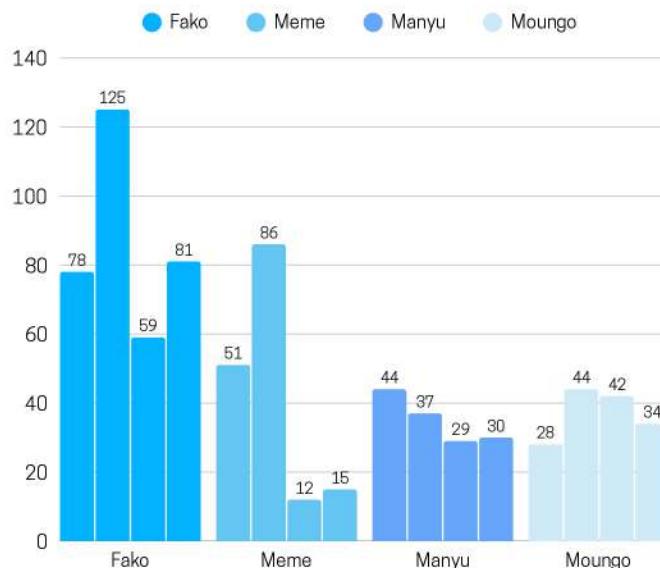


In contrast to previous years, the 2024 intervention excluded Bui, Mezam, and Menchum divisions and some previously covered sub-divisions from Moungo (Melong, Nkongamsba II, and Mbanga) and Momo (Mbengwi and Ngie).

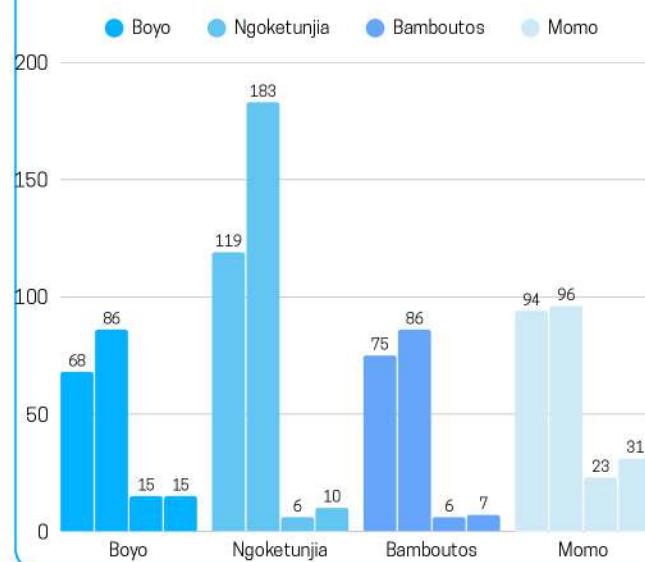
In 2024, UNHCR, serving as the provider of last-resort protection, addressed the urgent needs of children who required documentation for registration in public exams and schools by lowering the age requirement for assistance from 15 to 35 years to include children as young as 10. Consequently, among the 1,715 individuals (966 females and 749 males) who received birth certificates, 1,300 were children (comprising 743 girls and 557 boys), which accounted for 75.80% of the total beneficiary children and 43.3% of the total beneficiary girls.



Birth certificates assistance in Southwest and Littoral Regions

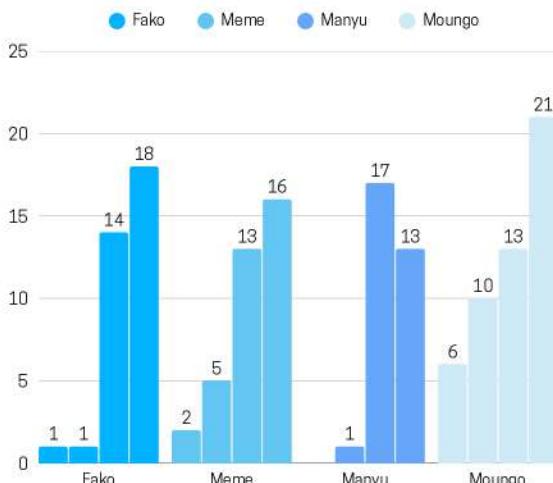


Birth certificates assistance in Northwest and West Regions

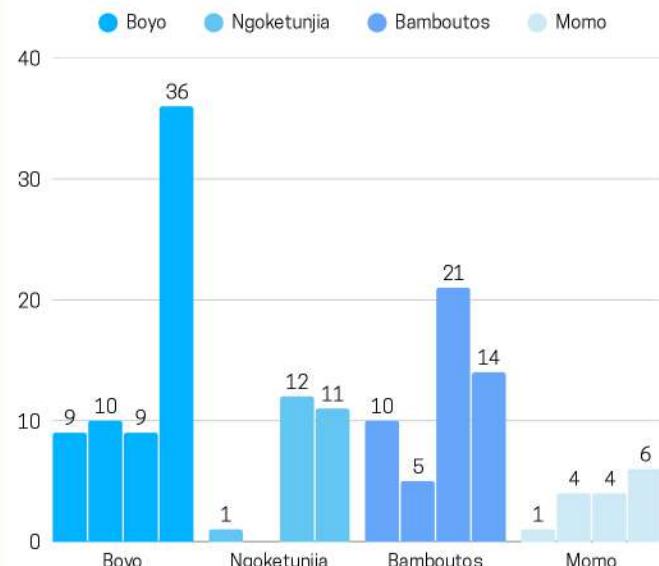


More young women (171) than young men (133) were assisted with national identity cards, making 56.25% of beneficiaries, with Boyo and Mouno recording more female beneficiaries.

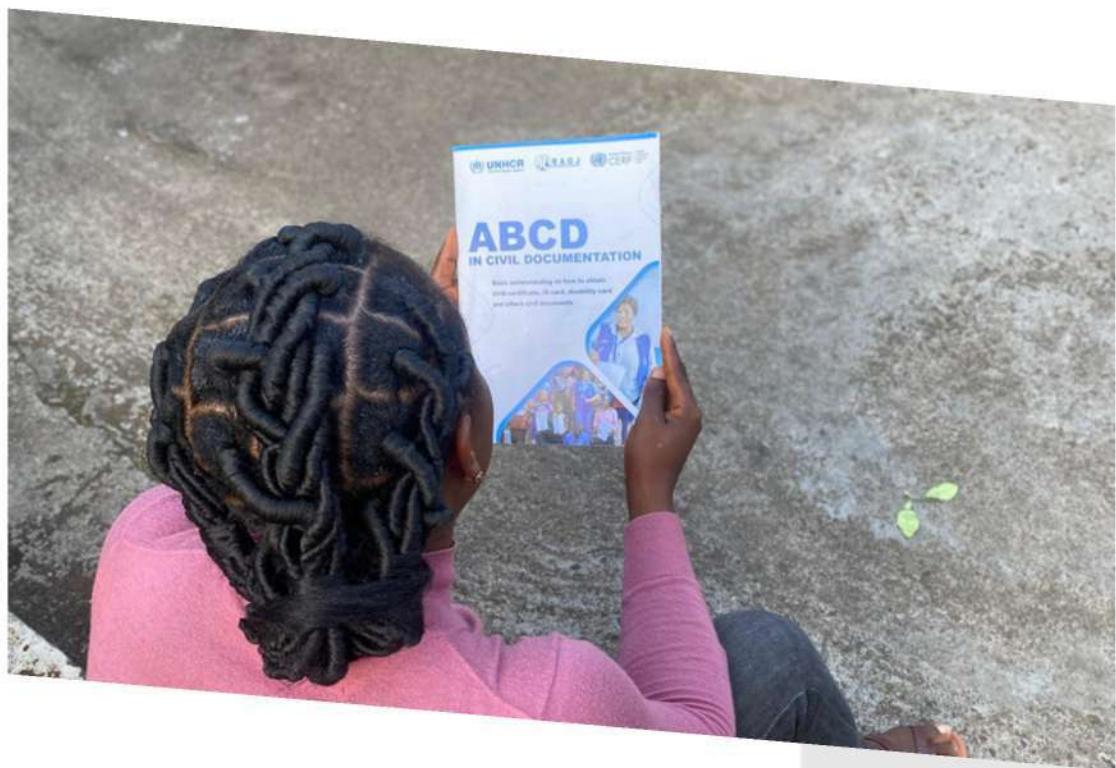
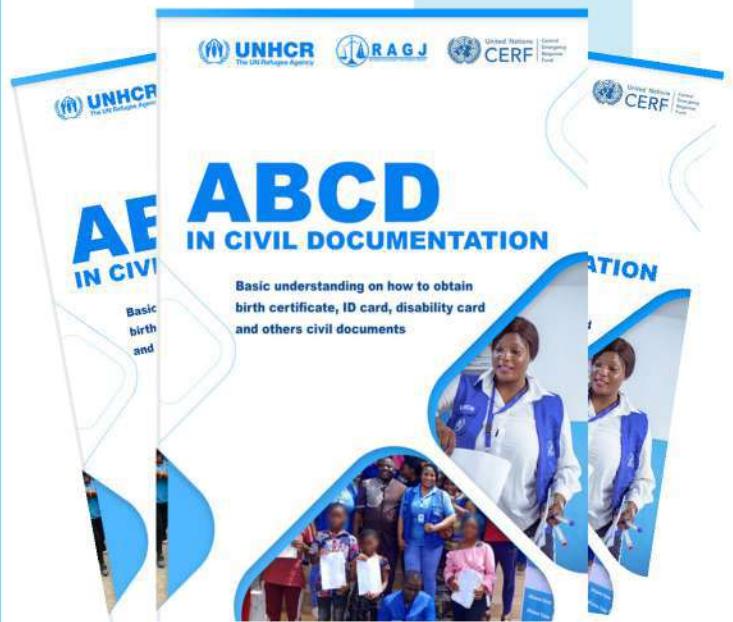
151 persons assisted with identity cards in Southwest and Littoral Regions



153 persons assisted with identity cards in Northwest and West Regions



1000 copies of a Community Handbook on Civil Documentation were produced and distributed free of charge in communities and amongst protection actors. The handbook provided self-help guidance drawing on best practices and learning to address the challenges and barriers displaced individuals face. It included information on topics such as how to identify a fraudulent birth certificate, reasons for the rejection of ID card applications by public security, the repercussions of providing false information for civil identification, and steps to take if a humanitarian or aid worker commits sexual or other forms of abuse. Additionally, it provided guidance on what to do if one experiences abuse from a teacher, doctor, authority figure, or host family member



SUCCESS STORIES

Civil Documentation

Multiple testimonies have emerged, with beneficiaries or their parents breaking into tears at the relief of having documents. Over 100 persons used their birth certificates to obtain a national identity card and purchase/re-register their SIM cards.

Improved livelihoods: Some have used their documents to obtain jobs (at a Micro-Finance company, as an MTN sales agent, etc.), constituting documents for job applications, completing business registration, fulfilling legal bike ride requirements, etc. For example, 23-year-old Gideon was forced to flee from Ndu to Bamenda with his siblings when their house was burned down. He lost his documents and struggled to get a new birth certificate, to no avail. He explained, "I couldn't make much money from riding a bike to provide for my siblings because I would run away from the Police while working. I don't remember the day I registered. I just heard news on the streets that people are registering IDPs for Birth certificates at mile 4. Then I rushed there, and my information was collected. Today, I have a birth certificate, which is an essential document. I also have an ID card, I will not have to settle too many Police controls, and I will be able to make enough money to feed my siblings and myself. Thank you, UNCHR; this is a surprise blessing".



After four years of struggle, a painter was forced to flee from Ediki Monge to Mile 16 after his brother was brutally killed. Residing in a high-risk neighbourhood and with a birth certificate and ID card exposed him to constant harassment from the police, and he could not secure formal jobs in other communities and distant locations, worsening his financial struggles. Now that he has a birth certificate and ID card, he can move freely, obtain jobs, and rebuild his life.

Free movement: Many people have escaped extortion from state security forces, arbitrary arrest, and detention since the reception of their ID cards. Others could relocate to a safe location due to insecurities. Some persons expressed that, since the advent of the crises, they have never travelled back to where they came from, but now they can return to their place of origin, as they now have the legal documents to travel. Someone testified, "...I can confidently identify myself as a Cameroonian citizen." Another person could travel to bury her relative in the village.

School registration/enrolment: Many pupils/students who had either dropped out of school for up to 7 years, were repeating studies, or could not enrol for studies (in primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational schools) or write public exams are now furthering their learning.



Access to essential services: Some used their documents to access social services, legalised marriage, file a litigation case for rape and child and release from prison. For example, despite being above the legal age for identification, Clara obtained a waiver to get an ID card. Previously, she could not have a birth certificate because of a fake court judgment. After giving birth, she had no orientation on the 90-day possibility of obtaining a free birth certificate for her child. Being abandoned by her biological mother and the father of her child, Clara struggled with anger issues and petty theft. UNHCR's intervention supported her and her child with birth certificates, an ID card, and multipurpose cash. She also received Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Psychological First Aid (PFA), which helped improve her behaviour.



Safety and Access to Justice

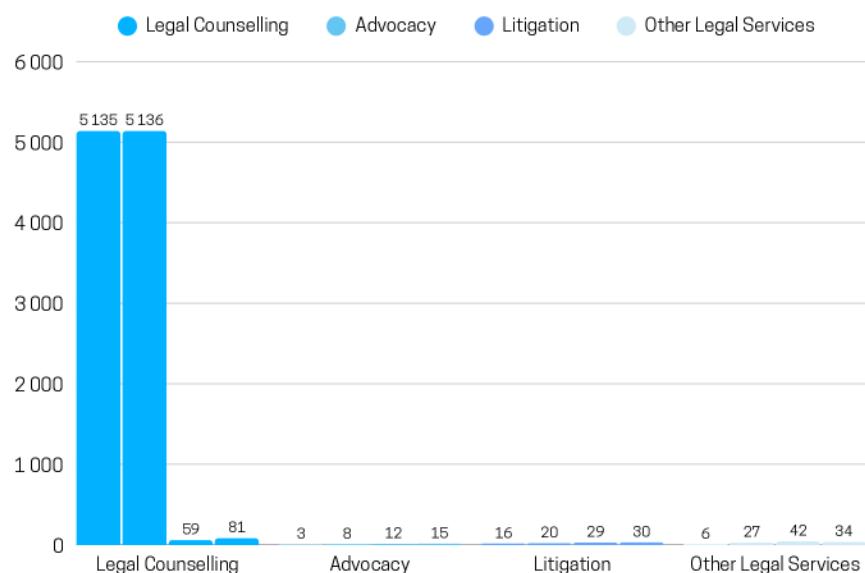
Vulnerable, marginalised, and displaced persons often lack the knowledge and means to access and use their legal rights to protect their interests, access justice, and obtain legal remedies. Besides being expensive, legal services are absent where the most vulnerable live. In some areas, administrative bottlenecks make access to justice and security services/systems difficult. Increasing human rights violations have weakened the protection environment. In 2024, protection monitoring actors reported 386,185 protection incidents, with September and October recording 1,158 (549 and 609 incidents, respectively). Moreover, the lack of resources increasingly exposes the most vulnerable displaced persons, especially women, to protection risks and violations of their fundamental rights, increasing gender-based violence incidents. Discriminatory traditional practices and cultural values also hinder women's rights, including housing, land, and property rights. Also, people living with disabilities among IDPs have limited access to basic services.

Legal Counselling and Representation

In 2023-2024, UNHCR-RAGJ provided legal counselling and representation to 10,351 persons across the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon through free-of-charge mobile, on-site, and online legal aid clinics and legal case management (following prescribed procedures). Working alongside 60 community leaders serving in the LSCs:

- 10,271 persons received legal counselling (case-by-case legal advisory).
- 11 persons received legal representation for out-of-court arrangements and advocacies to abort litigation processes.
- 36 persons received legal representation during litigation proceedings.
- 33 persons received other legal services.

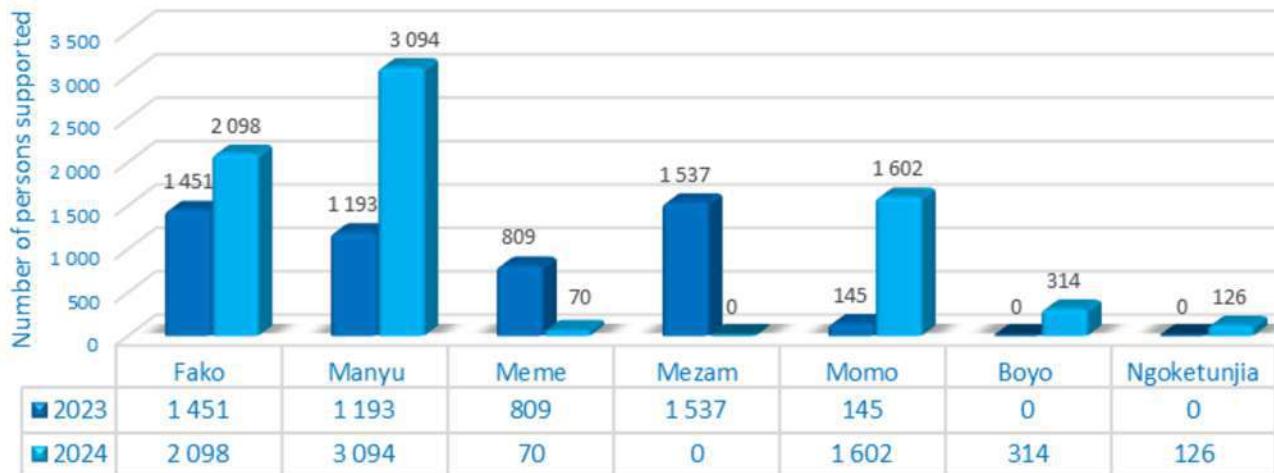
Legal Counselling in the Northwest and Southwest Regions



Legal Counselling

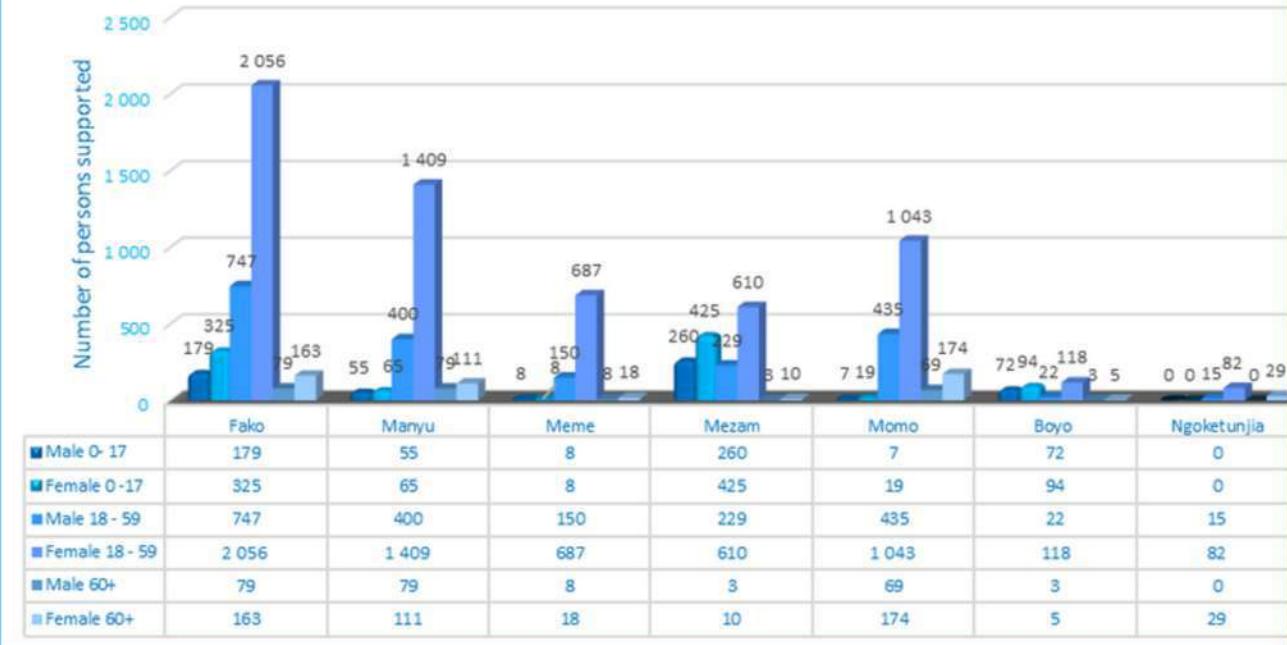
As a result of community efforts, 10,271 individuals received pro-bono (free) mobile legal counselling, which included comprehensive one-on-one or group legal advisory sessions held in churches, schools, community gatherings, and detention centers. These sessions focused on informing participants about legal rights, particularly concerning displaced individuals, persons with disabilities, children, and women, as well as addressing the legal implications of gender-based violence (GBV), including rape, sexual harassment, assault, and deprivation. The consultations were customized to address the specific needs of various groups, including students, out-of-school youth, sex workers, single mothers, abandoned women, widows, GBV survivors, individuals with disabilities (especially those with visual impairments), farmers, bike riders, prisoners, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and herbalists. In the Manyu (4,287 individuals) and Fako (3,549 individuals) divisions, more people received legal counselling than in other divisions, particularly in Ngoketunjia and Boyo.

Legal Counselling in the Northwest and Southwest Regions



72.5% of (7,451) participants were females, primarily women (6,005 persons), girls (936 persons), and older women (510 persons). Fako, Manyu, and Momo divisions witnessed the most remarkable turnout of women, with 2,056, 1,409, and 1,043 participants in the legal counselling sessions. Despite the low (27.5%) male participation, 1,998 out of the 2,820 male participants were men, 581 were boys, and 241 were older men.

Legal Counselling in the Northwest and Southwest Regions



After the clinical consultations and counselling sessions, most participants reported a sense of relief as they gained valuable insights into the legal aspects of their situations. Many expressed encouragement, knowing the team was attentive to their concerns and frustrations, guiding legal and non-legal options and referral pathways within their communities. This support helped to clarify the often complicated and expensive nature of legal representation. Participants felt empowered to report human rights violations, particularly incidents of gender-based violence. Community leaders also appreciated the involvement of external organizations that could help address their communities' challenges.

In addition, 1,000 copies of a Community Handbook on the Legal Aid Clinic were produced and distributed free of charge to communities and other protection actors. This handbook offered self-help guidance based on best practices and lessons learned, presenting

practical solutions for the issues faced by refugees and displaced individuals. It included important information, such as actions to take if a humanitarian or aid worker commits sexual abuse or what to do if a teacher, doctor, authority figure, or a host family member abuses one.



Legal Representation

After conducting both on-site and online legal clinical consultations, pro-bono (free) confidential legal advice was offered to 80 individuals facing protection risks and various vulnerabilities. Cases of human rights violations that were approved were handled following the Justice and Rule of Law (JRoL) procedures of RAGJ, which incorporate survivor-centered approaches to gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection. As a result, legal representation included:

- 11 persons accompanied during out-of-court arrangements (e.g., preliminary investigations at the security services, private chambers of the examining judges, or family/community meetings) and advocacies to abort litigation processes.
- 36 persons were represented during litigation proceedings (as a last resort for victims of human rights violations or protection for suspects showing reformation or who have undergone sentencing time).
- 33 persons provided other legal services (e.g., legal advisory, civil documentation, accompanied to public and social services for relevant assistance, including the obtaining of medical-legal certificates, restraining orders, etc.) and non-legal services (psychosocial support/first aid, family tracing, business consultation, etc.). This included referrals for medical, psychosocial, or other protective responses.

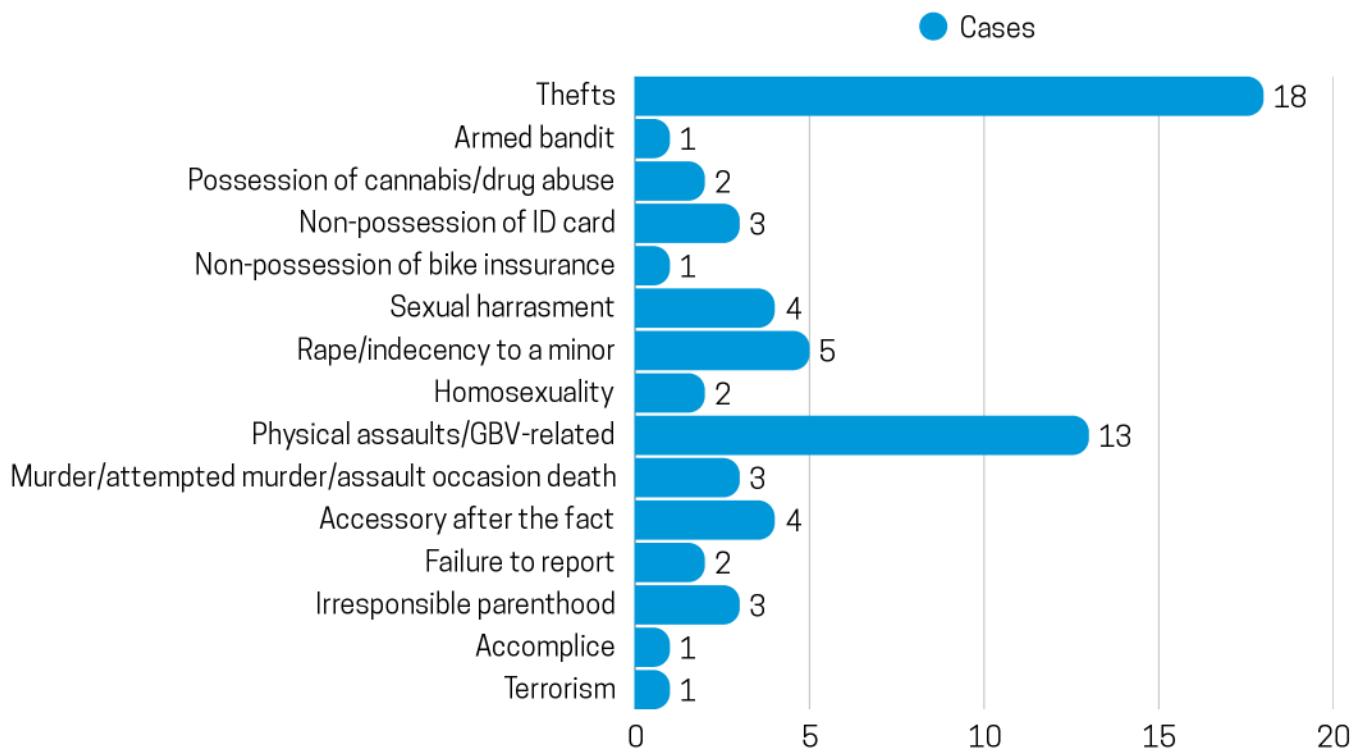
Legal Representation in the Northwest and Southwest Regions



The Peculiarity of Legal Representation Cases

- Arbitrary detentions, prolonged detentions without a hearing, delayed judgment, delayed release upon judgment, and other circumstances that needed legal representation to expedite legal proceedings or administrative procedures.
- Juvenile crimes (theft, non-possession of ID cards, unintentional harm and lack of insurance, drug abuse, indecent exposures, etc.)
- Gender-based violence (matrimonial violence, rape, homosexuality, indecency to a minor, child abandonment, irresponsible parenthood, deprivation of education, early and forced marriage, spouse dissertation, etc.).
- Most cases in need of alimony were able to transform their families' circumstances and protect the well-being of children with the multipurpose cash support from UNHCR.
- Unaccompanied minors, separated families, and homeless persons in need of shelter.
- Stigmatization of ex-detainees and socioeconomic reintegration.
- Economic hardships and need for medical assistance.

Litigation Cases in the Northwest and Southwest Regions



Individuals who received legal representation expressed immense relief from trauma, a restoration of their dignity, and renewed hope for potential changes in their circumstances and the possibility of achieving justice. Many reported increased self-esteem, empowering them to assert their rights and speak out against injustices confidently. Others felt secure and protected from the individuals responsible for violating their rights, while some experienced reconciliation within their families and felt their legal rights were safeguarded.

SUCCESS STORIES

Legal Representation

A first-of-its-kind rescue of a child from death after severe rape: Five-year-old Fifi and her mother fled from Wum, located in the Northwest region, to seek refuge in a fisherman's community in Limbe, where her mother resorted to sex work in a brothel. Tragically, Fifi was raped three times within a week by a Nigerian fisherman—a grim reality often faced by children in that community, where such acts go unpunished due to bribery and corruption. Thanks to a referral from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the intervention by UNHCR-RAGJ enabled Fifi to receive critical medical care, covering her medical costs. She was found to be critically anemic, and her health report indicated only a 1% possibility of future childbearing. During this time, Fifi and her mother were provided with a safe space while efforts were made to re-arrest the perpetrator, who had escaped from detention after committing his crimes. The community found the courage to speak out against him, spurred by UNHCR-RAGJ's mobile legal clinic counselling sessions, and in addition to medical aid, Fifi and her mother received psychosocial first aid and ongoing support, along with legal counselling, cash assistance, clothing, food, and transportation to a new secure location following their stay in the safe space. As the case unfolds in court, the local municipal council has partnered to shut down the brothel where Fifi's mother worked, leading to the arrest of the associated pimp. Notably, other young girls in the community have been liberated from sexual exploitation, effectively dismantling the network that trafficked women from Wum.

Child abuse and sexual exploitation within the school setting: Bobo, a 13-year-old boy whose mother is disabled, was tragically raped by his teacher after they were forced to flee from Ngoketunjia to Buea. Disturbingly, Bobo's case was reported to be the fourth instance of sexual abuse by this same teacher. When the school authorities were informed, Bobo and his siblings were promptly dismissed, and their mother faced threats. At the hospital, Bobo's mother, despite her disability, was denied access to the test reports, medico-legal documents, and photographs documenting the injuries sustained by Bobo. Following the intervention of UNHCR-RAGJ, she obtained the necessary medical reports and certificates. At the same time, Bobo was provided with a birth certificate, psychosocial first aid, and ongoing support with regular follow-ups. Additionally, they received food assistance and legal representation in court. The perpetrator has since been charged with multiple offenses, including rape (Section 296), homosexuality (Section 347(1)), indecency with a minor (Section 346(4)), and conditional threats using a knife (Section 302(1)) of the Penal Code. He also faces enhanced penalties due to his position as a teacher (Section 298). The court has delivered a favorable judgment for Bobo and three other young victims. Moreover, a civil claim has been filed against the school, compelling it to implement stringent measures to combat child abuse and sexual exploitation within its environment.

An unaccompanied minor and ex-detainee reunited with a relative: Sixteen-year-old Papi was arrested due to suspicion of being an informant and charged as an armed bandit after escaping from an armed camp where he was kidnapped and forced to perform menial tasks. Papi dropped out of school in 2018 due to the ongoing crisis and the death of his father. While imprisoned, Papi was believed to be dead by his family. After two months of efforts to locate his

relatives, it was discovered that his mother and grandmother were presumed dead after fleeing from their village during a violent crossfire. Papi was released from prison through the intervention of UNHCR-RAGJ and provided temporary shelter through assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs. Although he faced stigma during his time at the shelter, Papi eventually reunited with his maternal aunt and reintegrated into his new community. He has received a birth certificate, an ID card, psychosocial support, multipurpose cash assistance (facilitated by his aunt), and essential non-food items.

A one-of-its-kind release from prison: Jojo, a 30-year-old bike rider who had been displaced, was extraordinarily granted bail by the Military Tribunal after facing charges of terrorism and not possessing an ID card. At the time of his arrest, he was recovering from a 17-month coma caused by a serious bike accident. The Gendarmerie held him in custody while undergoing preliminary investigations at the Military Court. Despite the inquiry clearing him of any involvement with NSAG activities, he remained detained due to his stepbrother's status as an NSAG fighter who had been killed. Ultimately, Jojo's charge was revised to "failure to report," leading to his release on bail so he could continue his treatment and work toward acquittal.

Family reconciliation: Nineteen-year-old Mia was compelled to flee to Buea with her family, living in a dilapidated 'plank' shelter. She became pregnant by a neighbor's son, and his family initially agreed to take her in to live in their more modest home. However, as time went on, they became physically and verbally abusive towards her. When the baby reached six months old, they took the child from Mia and forced her to leave. Thanks to intervention and follow-up discussions at the Police station involving both families, Mia was reunited with her baby and reconciled. The family of her child's father committed to providing her with alimony to support her and the child moving forward.





"I have received life, I was death": Amidst displacement, homelessness, the death of her relatives, poverty, hardship, and insecurity, 50-year-old Mami Aya and her children had endured prolonged physical assault (with some incidents requiring hospitalization due to severe beatings) and humiliation from her husband. After receiving psychosocial first aid, psychosocial support, and legal counselling, she built the confidence to file for divorce and has since been provided with legal representation, resulting in a favorable judgment. Mami Aya and her children are beginning to heal from their trauma, and she has experienced a remarkable transformation, stating, *"I have received life."* Additionally, she was given a dignity kit and cash-based intervention support, empowering her and her children to launch a food business.

Woman with a disability overcoming gender-based violence: Eyo, a 33-year-old woman with a speech disability, was compelled to flee from Mbonge to Kake-Bwitingi. After spending a year in her new community, she began to suffer prolonged physical abuse and humiliation from her husband just seven months into their marriage. His relentless torment and neglect created a miserable existence for Eyo and her children, as he consistently refused to send them to school. With the help of psychosocial first aid, ongoing support, and legal counseling, Eyo gained the confidence she needed to break free from this cycle of abuse. This support not only alleviated her children's trauma but also led to a transformative physical and emotional recovery for Eyo. Additionally, she received cash support that allowed her and her children to start a small business. In November 2024, a court ruling was issued in her favor, granting her a divorce.

Secured Alimony: Zozo, a single mother, was compelled to flee from Belo to Douala and Buea due to homelessness and hardship, leading her to work in a brothel as a sex worker. Fortunately, her partner helped her escape that life, and they welcomed a child together. However, she endured physical violence and public humiliation from him and felt unable to return to Belo without proper identification documents. With intervention, her partner, accompanied by their relatives as witnesses, committed at the Police Station to stop harming her. He also provided her with 50,000 FRS to help her start a business. Additionally, she received vital support in the form of a certificate of loss, a birth certificate, and an ID card, which facilitated her return to Belo. Once back, Zozo continued to benefit from psychosocial support, a dignity kit, and cash assistance, all of which have enabled her to secure a stable livelihood for herself and her family.

Gender - Based Violence



The low-protection environment in the northwest and southwest regions exacerbates the occurrence of various forms of gender-based violence, ranging from denial of resources and opportunities to physical assault and rape. However, this intervention focuses on Boyo division. It builds on a situational analysis conducted in Belo, Fundong, and Njinikong in 2024 by RAGJ with 75 CBPC members (as discussed in the section on community engagement and women's empowerment).

GBV prevention, mitigation, and response in Boyo division resulted in 2,390 people receiving specialized GBV services through sanitization (1,974 people), case management (287 people), and livelihood training (152 people).



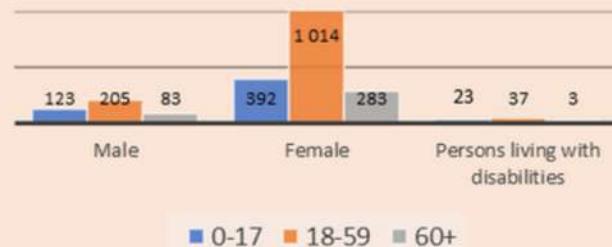
Community sensitisation

Over 82.4 % (1,969) of participants were girls, 16.9% (403) were women, 52.7% (1,259) were older women, and 12.8% (307) were older women. 4.4 % (105 persons) were persons with disabilities, and 1.6 % (39) were pregnant women.



2,100 people were sensitized in community settings, meeting houses, njanji groups, schools, churches, and hospitals to prevent, mitigate and respond to GBV incidents. 1,689 of the participants were girls (392), women (1,014 and older women (283). 87 participants were persons with disabilities, and 24 participants were pregnant women. Sensitization sessions were tailored to each group's needs, interests, and peculiarities. This included a critical session with Njinikom Drivers Union, which resulted in commitments to change behaviors towards women and girls. These sessions facilitated GBV incidence reporting through the UNHCR-RAGJ and other

GBV sensitization in Boyo



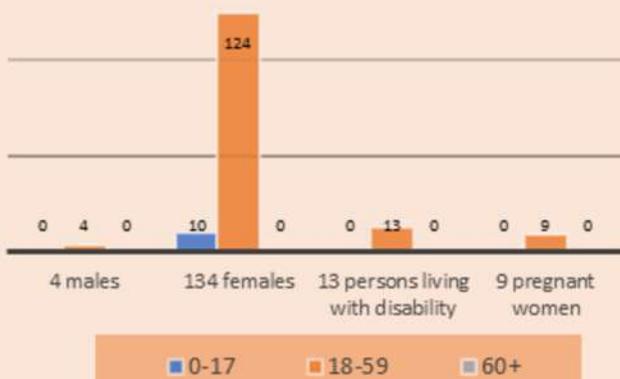
GBV Case Management and Psychosocial Support

138 GBV survivors in Boyo receive case management services ranging from psychosocial first aid, psychosocial support, and detailed follow-up of their daily routines.

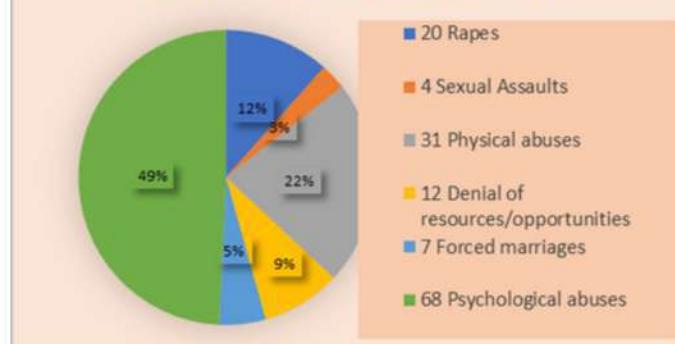
97.1% (134) of cases managed were girls, 7.2% (10) were women, 89.9% (124) were men, and 2.9% (4) were men. However, 9.4% (13) cases concerned persons with disability, and 6.5% (09) were pregnant women.

Psychological abuse represented 49% of the cases managed, followed by physical assault cases, which represented 22% of the cases. 20 cases of rape after 72 hours were equally reported. Cases of denial of resources and opportunities were critical as they were influenced mainly by the effects of matrilineal succession on the GBV survivors. Amongst the 138 psychosocial support cases managed 85 experienced multiple forms of violence.

GBV cases managed (PSS) in Boyo



Typology of GBV cases managed in Boyo



Dignity Kit's

200 girls, women, men, and boys exposed to protection risks, including GBV survivors, received dignity kits with essential items to support their wellbeing and help restore their dignity. 22% of dignity kit recipients were 44 persons with disabilities, primarily members of Comfort the Blind Association. 15.5% were 31 pregnant women, with a significant number of nursing mothers. Another considerable number received income generation and life skills training, multipurpose cash, and shelter/NFI support to improve their livelihoods.



16 Days Activism Against GBV

Building on the 2024 theme of “Towards Beijing +30: UNiTE to End Violence against Women & Girls,” with an accent on **“Responding and Rebuilding after Abuse,”** a succession of activities were organized to commemorate the 16 Days Activism Against GBV in Boyo.



1. **World Disability Day Celebration** with Fundong Association of Persons with Disabilities and Comfort the Blind Belo – sensitization focused on disability rights, inclusion, and GBV.
2. **School-related GBV Sensitization** in GBHS Fundong and SAJOCCUL Fundong engaged 400 students in discussions about GBV types, clinical management of rape, its consequences, and available support, including community referral pathways to explore.
3. **Cultural Jamboree** with 200+ people in Fundong, including community leaders, GBV survivors, students, and cultural groups, engaged in psycho-ergo therapy activities, including football matches, traditional dances, and rope-jumping challenges, alongside GBV sensitization that fostered social cohesion and symbolic commitments to end GBV. All community participants received GBV Treats (Body Milk, Eau de Javel, Liquid Soap, and Vaseline) produced by GBV survivors.
4. **Women and Girls Corner Discussions** in Fundong focused on building self-esteem, peaceful living, inclusion, tolerance, and diversity amidst GBV occurrences/challenges.
5. **Community Engagement** with traditional leaders devising context-suitable strategies to mitigate and respond to GBV and women's and girls' engagement in the community.
6. **Digital Awareness Campaign**, including online content publications highlighting project activities across digital platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and the website.



SUCCESS STORIES

Gender - Based Violence



Fresh perspective: Mami Zoey is a separated survivor of gender-based violence (GBV) who cares for a household of ten, which includes six children, two siblings—one of whom is a widow whose husband was killed by a stray bullet—and her bedridden mother, who has been accused of witchcraft by her matrilineal successor. Due to the ongoing crisis, Zoey lost her job as a cleaner at a hospital in Bafut. She faced physical violence from NSAGs and was abandoned by her husband after he lost his job, as he denied their children inheritance due to the matrilineal succession system. After returning to Boyo, Zoey could not farm the family land because her matrilineal

successor monopolized it and continued the accusations against her mother. However, she received psychosocial first aid, psychological support, and dignity kits. Following her participation in a training program on detergent production, Zozo requested the necessary ingredients from RAGJ and successfully began making detergent to support her family.

Restored health and rekindled hope:

Nineteen-year-old displaced Joso was forced into a non-consensual relationship by her parents, which resulted in sexual violence. Her family rejected and abandoned her. Left without support, she dropped out of school, was denied vocational training, and struggled to survive on her own. During this challenging time, she endured a second incident of rape, which left her pregnant and even more isolated. At seven months pregnant and lacking access to antenatal care, Joso reached out for help from UNHCR-RAGJ. She received psychological first aid, case management, and medical referrals, ultimately undergoing an emergency cesarean section at Njinikom Hospital that ensured her and her baby's survival. She regained her stability, receiving dignity kits, a national identity card, and multipurpose cash support.

Revitalized livelihoods and expanded access to education:

"Mami Shaa" endured physical and sexual violence from her husband while facing extreme hardships with her four children in a displaced setting. Her family struggled to meet basic needs, and her children were unable to attend school. After receiving psychological support, self-empowerment training in detergent production, and multipurpose cash assistance, she revitalized her "shaa" business. This allowed her to enroll her children in school and register her eldest daughter in nursing school. As a result, her family's living standards have improved, their dignity has been restored, and they now feel confident in their ability to integrate into the host community, paving the way for a brighter future.

Enhanced quality of life: “Mami Epkwang,” a 35-year-old mother of four, endured physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence at the hands of her husband, who ultimately abandoned her. Facing numerous insecurities, she relocated to a new community, where she experienced hardship and depression. However, after receiving psychological first aid, case management, dignity kits, and skills training, she launched a small business selling cooked food—specifically “Epkwang”—which now sustains her family.

Fostering hope for teenage mothers:

Eighteen-year-old Cindy, a teenage mother, faced immense challenges in caring for her child after experiencing rape, sexual harassment, and rejection from her family. With the help of case management, psychosocial support, dignity kits, and livelihood assistance, she obtained an ID card, facilitating her relocation. She enrolled in evening school and began a trade. Now, Cindy serves as an inspiration for other teenage mothers seeking to rebuild their lives.



Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

Participatory assessment in Boyo division

In April 2024, RAGJ conducted three situational analyses in Belo, Fundong, and Njinikom with 75 members from Community-Based Protection Committees, highlighting gender-based violence as a significant protection issue. The traditional matrilineal succession in Boyo dictates that inheritance flows through the maternal line, meaning that his sister's son inherits the husband's property. This system leaves women and children dependent on their nephews, who often mistreat them. This dependency complicates family problem-solving and reinforces power imbalances and discriminatory practices, such as dowries that treat women as property and limited land ownership for women. Those fortunate enough to own land frequently fear that family members will seize their property upon their death. Additionally, state encroachment has led to land scarcity for men.

The traditional council's unreliability is exacerbated by corrupt leaders issuing conflicting rulings, which results in land disputes being improperly reported to inappropriate authorities like the Gendarmerie, fostering a culture of impunity among law enforcement. The presence of non-state armed groups heightens the fear surrounding the reporting of increasing protection incidents within the community. As a result, men often feel justified in physically abusing their wives and partners, sometimes sending them back to their families under the guise of love and correction. Widespread poverty further heightens the vulnerability of women and girls to various insecurities, including promiscuity, prostitution, and sexual violence. Children born out of wedlock are frequently abandoned by their fathers, lack documentation, and endure numerous injustices, particularly in the absence of community child protection services.



Contribution to other UNHCR participation assessments:

- Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) Assessments in the North-West, South-West, West, and Littoral regions in 2023 and 2024.
- Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) for Buea flood incidence (2023), Egbekaw attack (2023), Bitiingi attack (2024), Upper Bayang attack (2024), etc.

Economic empowerment

157 persons (girls, women, men, & boys) were empowered through theoretical and practical training in household marketable items such as Body Milk (200 bottles of 250ml), Eau de Javel (200 bottles of 250ml), Liquid Soap (250 bottles of 750ml), and Vaseline (200 containers of 100g). Participants included 100 GBV survivors, members of social and cultural groups, six persons living with a disability, and six pregnant women. All produce was assembled and shared with GBV survivors and participants of the 16 Days Activism activities, including the GBV Cultural Jamboree in Fundong.



Protection servicing

About 2000+ persons referred to UNHCR by RAGJ for CBI support to mitigate protection risk were provided multipurpose cash, shelter, and NFI support, which improved the livelihoods of individuals and families. *Kyle is one such person. He struggled to provide for his wife and children (out-of-school dropouts) amidst displacement and hardship. After receiving birth certificates for his children and multipurpose cash support, he enrolled the children in school. He purchased a second-hand bike, which is now the source of livelihood for his family.*



UNHCR-supported feedback and response mechanisms

Regular feedback/appreciation calls were received from people supported across all the project communities. This helped identify issues and people needing more attention and support, improving the response strategy and impact tracking.

Supporting the implementation of Promoting Economic and Social Participation (PESoP) of Internally Displaced Persons in the West Region, Cameroon.

This intervention extended administrative and financial assistance for training, registration, profiling, and sensitization in five municipalities - Bafoussam 1, Dschang, Foumban, Kouoptamo, and Mbouda from November to December 2024.



Key Lessons

- Application of humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality, and do-no-harm facilitates working with multiple stakeholders.
- Improved literacy will help people claim their rights and responsibilities, demystify legal concepts, and reduce misconceptions about legal processes, procedures, and practices.
- Patience and detailed follow-up are required to obtain accurate information from people, and individuals must understand the repercussions of providing dishonest information so that they can safeguard their lives and livelihoods.
- Livelihood and cash support are critical aspects of protection servicing as they promote the dignity and community reintegration of vulnerable, marginalized, and displaced persons.
- Survivor-centered legal servicing includes psychosocial serving and systemic time investments.
- Communities need to explore alternative ways to achieve justice, establish protective measures for victims of rights violations, and denunciation outlets for GBV perpetrators.
- When men (tradition authorities, religious leaders, native doctors, bike riders, teachers, etc.) actively engage in GBV prevention and mitigation activities, patriarchal norms are reviewed, minimizing harmful traditional practices such as property seizure from widows and children, ownership of widows, deprivation of education and other opportunities, etc.
- Mainstreaming agriculture and environmentally friendly activities in all interventions helps to reinforce the sustainability of actions in communities.





MORE **ABOUT US**



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