

## **The Challenges of The Socio-Economic Integration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Host Communities in Cameroon: the case of the “Anglophone” conflict-induced IDPs living in Edea I District**

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### **Abstract**

*The emergence of refugees and internally displaced persons is one of the greatest consequences of violent conflicts in the world. The escalation of the conflict in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon in 2017 (generally known as the Anglophone Crisis) has led to the emergence of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. Some of these persons are living in the conflict regions while others are scattered in other parts of the country. Many of these IDPs are now settled in the Edéa District area in the Littoral region of Cameroon. Leaving their usual place of residence to settle in Edea also raises challenges of integration in the new community. This article seeks to highlight these challenges in the socio-economic domain as experienced by the Anglophone conflict-induced IDPs in Edéa I District in order to attempt some mitigation measures. To achieve this objective, a qualitative data collection mechanism was employed including interviews and focus group discussions. Forty-two (42) persons were interviewed and a focus group discussion comprising eight (8) persons. Interviews were transcribed in word format and imported into the Nvivo 12 Pro software. The findings revealed that IDPs are facing social and economic challenges in their new environment and this has become a menace to the peace and security of Edéa I District. At a social level, they struggle to learn the local language in order to communicate. At the economical level, since most of them have lost important documents including their National Identity Cards, birth certificates and diplomas, it has become practically very difficult for them to be employed in the local industry in Edea. Moreover, issues of marginalization were raised by these IDPs. The policy recommendations emanating from the findings of this study are relevant to key stakeholders in the Government and international peace and development partners interested in improving the living conditions of the “Anglophone IDPs” in Cameroon.*

**Key words:** *Anglophone crisis, IDPs, Socio-economic integration*

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## Introduction

The “Anglophone” conflict in the North-West(NW) and South-West(SW)“ Regions of Cameroon can be traced back to the Fouban Conference of 1961 which united the two territories with different colonial legacies into one. The German government and the traditional Douala chiefs signed a treaty in July 1884, establishing a protectorate called Kamerun. These territories were partitioned into two after the defeat of the Germans during World War I (WWI). The League of Nations appointed France and the United Kingdom as joint trustees of Kamerun. As such, four-fifth of the territory went to France and the rest was occupied by the British (Nyamnjoh and Konings, 2003). During this period of the mandate and the trusteeship, each colonial power shaped their territories in their own image. This resulted in major differences in politics and culture. English was the official language in the territory under British administration. The justice system (Common Law), the education system, the currency and social norms followed the British model. The system of indirect rule allowed traditional chiefdoms to remain in place and promoted the emergence of a form of self-government to the extent that freedom of the press, political pluralism and democratic change in this part of the territory.

In contrast, the French-administered territory was directly governed by French administrators following the assimilationist model, although colonizers and the traditional elites also practiced a form of indirect government, especially in the north of the country. French became the lingua franca and France’s social, legal and political norms shaped the centralist political system of successive regimes. Another period is the independent and the reunifications. The French speaking territory gained independence on 1 January 1960, becoming the Republic of Cameroon. In a referendum held on the 11 February 1961, Northern Cameroon voted to join Nigeria and British Southern Cameroons voted to join the Republic of Cameroon. As such, British Southern Cameroons became independent on 1 October 1961 by joining the Republic of Cameroon (Abwa 2015; Ngoh, 1996). At this period, the landscape in Southern Cameroons was already dynamic. Though another segment of the British Southern Cameroons population aspired for full independence, the United Nations, however excluded the independence option and limited the referendum to a choice between joining Nigeria or reunification with the Republic of Cameroon (Ngoh, 1996).

The reunification of the two Cameroons in 1961 brought in significant changes in the English speaking territory. Driving moved from British inspired right to French inspired left, French became the dominant language and appointments at the national level favoured citizens of the eight other regions of the country. Moreover, development projects were directed towards French territories.

The abrogation of the 1961 Federal system and the creation of a unitary state in 1972 also compounded matters. The unitary state embodied centralisation with powers concentrated in the hands of the President which made English speaking consider themselves as being assimilated into the French system. Rather than a state (West Cameroon) English speaking were now represented by two Provinces (North West and South West) among the majority French speaking ten provinces. As such, citizens of the former British Southern Cameroons started challenging the system and argued that their unity with French Cameroon has reduced them to second-class citizens (Fonchingong, 2013).

The immediate cause of the current highly destructive conflict in the NW and SW regions of

Cameroon was the 2016 strike action masterminded by Lawyers and Teachers. These core demand of these trade unionists was the return redeployment of French Teachers deployed to English schools and the redeployment of Public notaries from the English speaking regions to the French speaking regions. Their arguments were sourced from government's appointment of French Speaking Judges to English law courts and French speaking teachers in English inspired schools. According to these trade unions, it was a deliberate scheme to annihilate the English sub-system of education and the Common Law legal system. As a solution to the problem, the Lawyers and Teachers proposed a redeployment of these persons and a return to two-state federation as transpired between 1961 and 1972 and a means of protecting inherent socio-cultural and political identities of the territories. The movement which considered a nonviolent approach was confronted with violent measures by state security officers. With persistent violence on English speaking population, radical's elements within Anglophone groups embraced violence and transformed the conflict into a war.

As a consequence of the escalation of the conflict since 2017, hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs have emerged. The humanitarian situation is dire with about 6,000 persons killed since 2017 and at least 2.2 million persons living in the conflict zones are in need of humanitarian assistance (Human Right Watch Report, 2023). The challenging situation has accounted for the displacement of some 87,000 who have fled into neighbouring Nigeria while some 628,000 others have been displaced internally within the territory of Cameroon (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023). The displacement of persons within the national territory has also occasioned the Edea 1 District to serve as a host community for people running from violence in the North West and South West regions. Moving from their original place of residence to settle in Edea has also raised some serious challenges related to their integration in the host community.

The District of Edea was created by Presidential Decree N°2008/018 of January 2008. It is the chief town of the Sanaga Maritime Division, one of the four Divisions of the Littoral region of Cameroon. In order to bring the administration closer to the people, Edea was further subdivided in two parts: Edea I District situated at Pongo and Edea II District headquartered at Ekite.

Being a town in the French speaking part of Cameroon, French is predominantly the dominant language in Edea. As noted above, language is embedded in culture, and as such, the French system and way of life dominates in Edea besides French, the native Bakoko and Bassa languages are widely spoken in the area which sometimes makes integration for non-natives challenging, including the IDPs.

On the contrary, English and Pidgin-English are the most popular mediums of expression in the English-speaking NW and SW Regions. This is also embedded in a cultural pattern and lifestyle influenced by years of British dominion. This therefore, has generated a lifestyle and cultural pattern different from what transpired in the eight French speaking regions. Moreover, geography and language affinity in the two English speaking regions have generated a strong economic symbiosis with the Eastern region of Nigeria. These differences project a dichotomy between lifestyle, economy and politics between the English speaking and French speaking's populations in Cameroon. It is in this tense atmosphere that displaced persons from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon find themselves in the Edea I District.

Despite the recognition of the special status to the North West and South West regions following

the Major National Dialogue held from September 30<sup>th</sup> to October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the security situation did not ameliorate in the sense to maintain populations in their different localities. On the contrary, displacement has been ongoing unabated. This situation has become a source of conflicts in the new environment where displaced populations find themselves while seeking for better life.

The coming into a new environment have created social and economic needs. Needs that are not easy to satisfy due to cultural and linguistic differences. To survive in their new environment, these IDPs have to overcome communication, accommodation, nutrition, education, health issues and even gender issues. These challenges have become impediments to the adaptation of IDPs in their new environment. Nonetheless, the dynamism of human beings and especially the IDPs and host community have also raised resilience measures.

The case of Edea I District transcends the plight of IDPs. Edea is the closest city to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, from where transits a multitude of people fleeing violence in the Northwest and Southwest regions. Edea I District is marked by the presence of huge farms which attract many IDPs in search of a better life. Given the fact most of these IDPs were farmers, the large palm oil plantations in Edea I District have become a pull factor. These displaced persons are mostly housed in the town hall of Edea I District by family members or friends. Coming from a different background with a desperation of surviving at all cost, the integration of IDPs also raises issues of peace and security in the host communities of Edea I District.

The overbearing interest generates a focus on challenges IDPs are facing in host community as well as resilient mechanisms employed by both the IDPs and their host community. This article therefore sets out to investigate some of these challenges, from a socio-economic standpoint and the methods of adaptation and resilience of IDPs in host community in Edea I District, from a micro-level analytical perspective.

## **1. Theoretical Perspectives**

The analysis in this study is informed by two theoretical perspectives, the theory of Adaptation and the Malthusian theory.

### **The theory of adaptation**

To highlight the challenge of adaptation faced by IDPs, Darwin (1859) is one of the pioneers in the development of the theory of adaptation following a series of tests he performed on Galapagos Island in the 1830s. His study showed that the theory of adaptation is known as the survival of the fittest. On the framework of his adaptation theory, Darwin explained that it is the ability of an organism to adapt to an environment with time.

According to King (2018), there are three forms of adaptations including structural, physiological, or behavioural. However, King (2005), notes that physiological adaptations are not always seen in an organism's appearance. Environments are changing rapidly, and to cope with these changes, people have to adapt. As such, adaptation can therefore happen or take place at different periods. This type of adaptation can be driven by either a change to the environment or the behaviour of another person. For instance, the fact that IDPs are out of their communities of habitual residence and have to rent farmlands from natives in host

communities to cultivate crops explains their level of adaptation. In doing so, they are developing greater intelligence and improving the use of their common senses. "Though this may not totally satisfy their basic needs, it however, creates an enabling environment and atmosphere for them (Interview, Maa Akum, december 2022).

In addition to changes in a predatory strategy, examples of behavioural integration include changes in social patterns. For instance, some of the internally displaced girls involve themselves in prostitution to survive.

This theory makes it possible to understand the structural adjustments that occur in the lives of IDPs of Edéa I District who seek to a better living condition in their new environment on the one hand, and on the other hand, their behaviour, and their actions in the physical and mental level in terms of resilience. .In this way, it becomes possible to understand the adjustment or changes in IDPs behaviour to adapt to the new host communities.

### **The Malthusian theory**

The Malthusian theory of population was first articulated by Thomas Robert Malthus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in his 1798 book. The first edition of an essay was on « *the Principle of Population* ». Malthus believed that, if « *human progress and technology advancement would lead to unlimited prosperity and abundance.* » (Malthus T., 1798), Malthus argued that population growth tends to outstrip the availability of resources, leading to poverty, famine, and other formes of suffering. He believed that human population have a natural tendency to increase exponentially, while the production of food and resources can only increase arithmetically. This mismatch between population growth and resource availability, according to Malthus, would inevitably lead to a crisis where population growth would be checked by factors such as disease, famine, or war. This theory is actualy forlulated in first place in 1798 by Malthus, on population growth and difficulties to handle it (Malthus, T.R, 1809).

Over time, Malthusian theory of population has been both criticized and refined by other econommist, demographers, and scholars. Some have argued that technological advancements and improvements in agricultural productivity have allowed societies to overcome the limits to growth predicted by Malthus. Others have pointed out that Malthus dit not anticipate the role of social and economic factors in shaping population dynamics. Despite these criticism, the Malhusian theory has had a lasting impact on discussions about population growth, resource scarcity, and sustainable development. It continues to be relevant in debate about global population trends, environmental sustainability, and policies related to family planning and reproductive health.

As such, the Malthusianism is a theory which opposed Esther Boserup thesis developed in her book: « *Evolution agraire et pression démographique* » (Fourquin, G. Ester Boserup, 1972 ), in which human been who experience soustained demographic growth have more chance to enter in a process of true economis growth than those with stagne or unchangable population. Malthusianism is a theory that empharsizes the relationship between population growth and resource availability, highlighting the potential challenges and constraints that arise when the population exceeds the carrying capacity of the environment.

In this study, we have realised diversecity between population growth of IDPs of Edéa I District

in Cameroun and food resources of the community. In this study oriented towards Malthus thoughts, we have tried to compare the present demographic context of IDPs in Edéa I District of Northwest and Southwest which consequently invahe on their food security. This situation results on lac of cultivable land available for IDPs, lac of job opportuniy and humanitarian fonds.

Malhusian theory has permit us to understand the negativ part of populations growth of IDPs from Norwest and Sudwest regions in Edea I District on available food resources for their survival. Beside theories, this study is carry on by methods.

## **2. Methods of Data collection and Analysis**

This study adopts a purely qualitative approach, with the use of individual interviews and focus group discussions with IDPs living in Edea I District, to generate the necessary primary data. Secondary data obtained from existing sources such as books, articles, Government and NGOs reports etc. According to Komis *et al.* (2013), the term qualitative method refers to any technical or intellectual process for processing, manipulating, exploring, and interpreting data resulting from qualitative data collection or open-ended questions. This is for the purpose of identifying sequences, spotting patterns, understanding processes, forming categorizations or classes of objects, and making assumptions and conjectures about aspects (subjects, objects, or events) of the lives of individuals. In total, several interviews (individual interviews, focus group with all gender represented) were conducted which mobilized fifty (50) persons. This included IDPs and members of the host communities, including local authorities and community leaders (traditional authorities, school proprietors, and clergies, chief of canton). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 42 persons and one focus group discussion involving 08 persons of both sexes. The focus group included a local chief, a scholar, some IDPs and natives. During the meetings, each displaced person played the game, and this according to their seniority in the Swiss Farm community of Edéa I District.

Each local actor and IDP shared their experiences and perceptions of the IDP crisis in Edea I District. Everyone IDP interviewed or who took part in the focus group discussions said what they thought with different points of view, depending on whether they came from the North West or from the South West regions.

The audio files from the focus groups and interviews were transcribed in Word format and imported into the Nvivo 12 Pro software for use. This software made it possible to structure and analyse a corpus of research. The encoding of the data also made it possible to carry out a thematic analysis to bring out the central themes from a process of codification. According to Paillé *et al.* (2010), the schematization process makes it possible to transpose a corpus of data into a certain number of themes representative of the content of the text analysed, in relation to the research orientation. There is a question of systematically identifying, grouping, and making a discursive examination of the themes addressed in a corpus and highlighting the communicational, educational, economic, and social aspects of IDPs of Edéa I District. The process adopted here was to carry out a textual search on the corpus transcribed from the interviews by highlighting the frequency of the words or matrix crossing. In the specific case of this work, it is a question of looking for the references of repetitions of words according to the attributes defined for the internally displaced persons living within the Swiss farm community in Edéa I District.

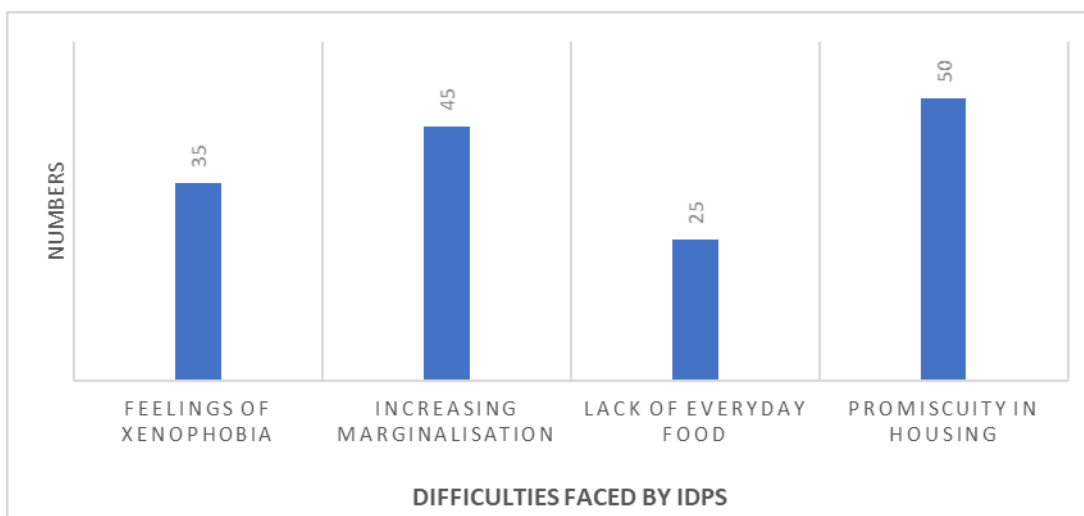
### 3. Analysis of Results

#### 3.1 Integration Challenges Encountered by IDPs in Edea 1 District.

##### 3.1.1: Security Related Challenges

As shown in Figure 1 below, the arrival of IDPs has led to increased insecurity in the community. This is because most of IDPs are jobless and vulnerable. Some of them spend their night outside and can become a source of insecurity in the area.

**Figure 1: Summary of challenges encountered by IDPs**



**Source:** fieldwork survey

##### 3.1.2 Culture and Communication Barriers

The lack of communication between the IDPs and the host community members have created frustrations on the side of the IDPs. Added to this are language Barriers Indeed, many IDPs have difficulty expressing themselves in French or in the local language. Though French and English are the two official languages in Cameroon, French dominates in the French speaking regions including Edea. Moreover, since most of the IDPs are coming from a purely English-speaking background, there is always a communication impasse which impedes understanding and integration.

Besides French, natives of Edea also speak Bakoko and Bassa. As such, communication in Edea I bothers around French, Bakoko and Bassa. The inability of IDPs to master these languages serves as a barrier for their integration. Moreover, these language difficulties are a source of misunderstanding between IDPs and natives which may sometimes lead to conflicts.

In such situations, complaints are hardly channelled to the authorities by IDPs because they are unable to express themselves in French. Since most offices in Cameroon, and especially in the “Francophone” regions privileged French, IDPs in Edea I also find it difficult to fully

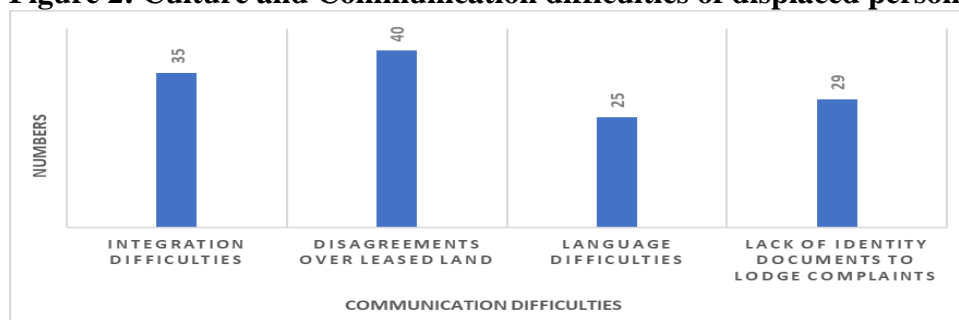
communicate with the local authorities. As a matter of fact, they cannot defend themselves officially. As a result, IDPs are abandon to themselves without any defence.

Furthermore, because IDPs are unable to communicate either in French or in local languages, they are always considered as strangers in the land. This impeded their integration in the cultural patterns of the Bakoko and Bassa people who make-up the majority. In an area culturally sensitive, the inability to master cultural patterns also raises problem of integration of IDPs and their acceptance by the natives.

The difficulty of IDPs to lodge complains at the local gendarmerie is also rooted in their inability to acquire official identification papers. In 2019, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa documented 206 villages which have been burned down by security forces since the escalation of the conflict. Some of these villages were completely destroyed while others were partially destroyed (CHRDA, 2019). Most of these houses were burned down including all their belongings. In most cases victims were able to run only with dresses on their bodies. Sometimes, the advancement of the forces occasioned an impromptu mass exodus into the bushes for safety. In the course of their operations, most of these houses are burned including documents of the victims (interview with many IDPs). As such, majority of IDPs and refugees both within the Cameroonian territory and Nigeria no longer have basic identification documents including birth certificates and identity cards. Since there has been no official programme to re-establish the identification documents of these persons, many are unable to be identified. Narrowing down to the case of IDPs in Edea, many are afraid of being arrested should they present themselves to the authorities without official identification documents. This also creates a communication barrier between the IDPs and the local state authorities in Edea1.

Figure 2 below shows that IDPs find it difficult to integrate into their new environment from the premises of communication.

**Figure 2: Culture and Communication difficulties of displaced persons**



**Source: Field work survey**

### 3.1.3 Education Challenges

The insecurity in the North West and South West regions has occasioned a general school boycott. Many teachers have abandoned the classroom especially as separatists have generally announced the closure of government run schools. As such, many teachers have become the targets of Non state armed separatist groups. This situation has crippled the education system in the two conflict regions. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that 81 teachers and students were abducted in 2022 and five teachers and students were killed mostly by armed groups (UNOCHA, 2023). International reports also have



it that. This situation has put 800,000 school children out of school in these two regions (Tapuka, 2022). In this prevailing situation, IDP families and children moved into new towns hoping to find peaceful environments and atmosphere for education.

In the case of IDPs in Edea I, upon arrival, most of them were unable to attend classes because of language and communication challenges. Only one English speaking school exist in the Swiss Farm area where most IDPs are found. All the other schools are purely French inclined and cannot host IDPs from English speaking background. Given the fact that the only English speaking school is privately owned, fees are exorbitant beyond the reach of IDPs. As such, most IDP children either engage in farming activities or other income-generating activities. For the girls, some have turned to prostitution and “survival sex” “as coping strategies”.

Though language challenges pose a serious setback to the integration of IDP children, it should be underscored that Cameroon operates two separate educational subsystem including the Anglo-Saxon and French speaking subsystems sourced from their colonial past. Beyond major linguistic differences, these two subsystems differ sharply in their manner of instruction and content. For example, *Biology* in the Anglosaxon subsystem of education is very much different in content and manner of instruction from *Biologie* in the French speaking subsystem of education. The end of course and certificates examinations in these two subsystems are also very different. Moreover, the general instruction manner is different such that children trained under the two subsystems exhibit particular character traits in life inherent to their academic backgrounds. The two subsystems of education are embedded in a cultural pattern which is exhibited in stark differences in daily interactions between the English speaking and French speaking populace. This explains why, despite language inhibitions, it is still impossible for IDP children to attend French speaking schools.

Insecurity is also growing in the locality. This situation is evidenced in attacks and rape of several pupils and students on their way to school. For instance, Oliver, a primary school girl of 7 was kidnapped and raped on her way to school in October 2022(interview with one of the community chief, November 2022). Complaints from parents led to unexpected raids by the security officers. This was followed by mass arrests especially among IDPs who often have no identification papers. The school is a rare commodity in this locality, with the rise of insecurity and violence. This is compounded by the non-payment of salaries of teachers which push them to consider alternative means of subsistence than teaching (interview with 2 teachers, 35 and 40 years old, November 2022).

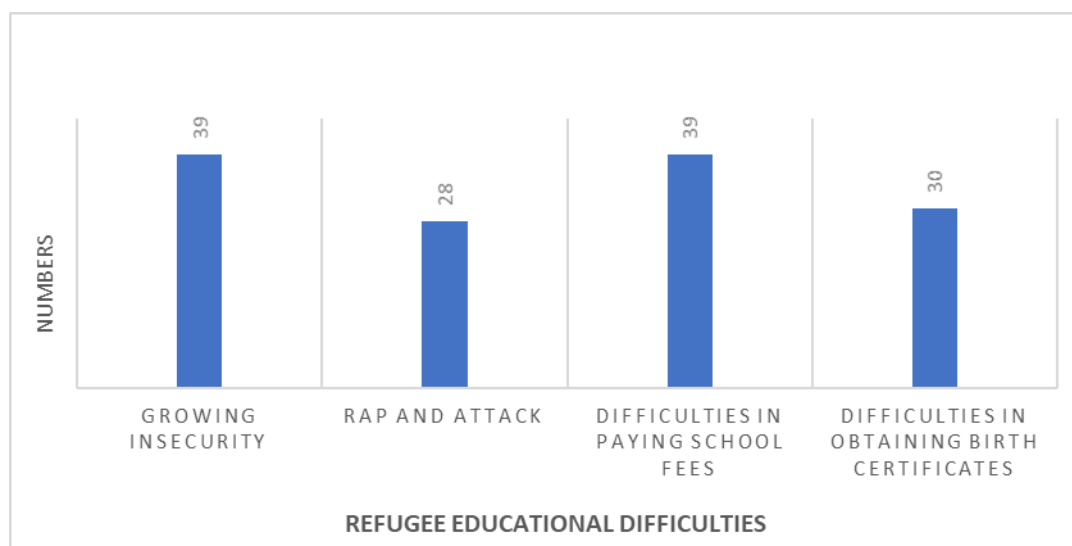
On their part, school authorities have complained that since some of the children are from IDP homes which are economically constrained, they are unable to pay school fees which is the main source of salary for the teachers. Teachers end up living a precarious life. One of these school teachers, Mr Ombe took shelter in a classroom after being driven by his landlord for non-payment of rent. This eventually affected his morale and transformed him into an alcoholic, and by extension also affected the pupils he was teaching.

Since my arrival in this place, as a school teacher, I have tried to offer my service to the only English school in this quarter. Unfortunately, things are not working well. Up to now, I have no income. I cannot pay my rent nor being able to buy a piece of bread. I find myself sleeping in a classroom. I became a bagger of palm vine as you can see. My hope is to return home one day (interview with

a 38 years old man, November 2022.)

IDPs have also face economic challenges Figure 3 shows below reals that the chances of going to school are very limited due to the poverty situation of parents or family members as well as the insecurity of IDP children.

**Figure 3: Difficulties of education in the locality of the Swiss farm**



**Source: Fieldwork survey**

### 3.1.4 Economic and land use patterns challenges

At first instance, most IDPs are unemployed because of lack of identification documents or language barrier. The main industrial entity within the Edea I District is the Cameroon Palm Oil Company (SOCAPALM).<sup>1</sup> It is one of the largest agro industrial giants in Cameroon and accounts for nearly 48 percent of Cameroon’s palm oil products (socfin Lates news, nov. 2022). Though it is headquartered in Cameroon’s economic capital, Douala, it has plantations in several rural areas and towns including the Swiss Farm area of Edea 1 District. As such, it is the main employer within the District. Because most IDPs do not have identification papers, it is difficult for them to be employed by SOCAPALM. Though SOCAPALM is a national company, its main working language is French which limits the employment opportunities of IDPs from English speaking backgrounds.

In the above prevailing situation, IDPs are mostly labourers in the farmlands of the host community members. Their desperation to earn a living also exposes them to unfriendly treatments. Most of them argue that they are treated like slaves without any consideration. One, IDP explains the situation as follows: “*We have difficulty adapting to daily life. I generally do*

<sup>1</sup> Originally in French; Société Camerounaise des Palmeraies

*cash work on  
‘‘Bamenda’’<sup>2</sup>.*

*private plantations. They treat us like slaves and insult us*

Added to this are exorbitant house rents and the high cost of renting fields for cultivation. In cases where the fields are rented to IDPs, natives collect them immediately after cultivation.

This situation is considered by the natives as a threat to their well-being. The English speaking crisis led to a subsequent increase in the population of the Swiss farm with an influx of IDPs. Migrations are made on the presence of a relative already present in the community. This massive surge of internally displaced persons has changed the landscape of life of the indigenous inhabitants living in this locality, the latter sometimes feel dispossessed of their own lands or even invaded. This creates stigma and hate speech with words such as “*Bamenda go home*” are common (Interview with Pa Suh, November 2022). This suggests that the natives of Edeá I District feel threatened by the presence of IDPs and they are afraid of losing their land as well.

According to some narratives, natives have realized that IDPs are hardworking and able to survive in the harsh condition.

The problem of housing is also acute. Residents sometimes refuse to rent their houses to IDPs. An IDP and primary school teacher explains that:

When I arrived in the locality of Edea and wanted to rent a room, I was rejected because I was an IDP. The reason was that the land lady assumed that since I do not have a job, as an IDP, I will not be able to pay the rents. As a matter of fact, some displaced persons sometimes live with six or even eight people in one room, others live with friends. This has increased the rate of promiscuity among the IDPs (Interview, November 2022)

These economic challenges represent an acute lack of food items among IDPs. Due to the persistent increase in food products in the country, the standard of living for most IDPs is very low. Moreover, there is a near absence of humanitarian agencies in the area, which leave IDPs to fend for themselves. Most humanitarian agencies concentrate on IDPs in the conflict epicentre (in the NW and SW regions). As such, IDPs in places like Edea I entirely take care of themselves. In the absence of rented land, some IDPs have converted to the sale of palm wine and other related resources such as palm nuts. IDPs buy palm tree trunks and collect palm wine and supply to local vendors.

Where these IDPs are employed, they are sometimes not paid for work done. This is sourced from the general negative atmosphere surrounding their presence in EDEA I where some natives consider them as slaves and liable to torment. They end up doing what is commonly called “*cash work*” on the farms of owners<sup>3</sup> to survive. The frustration of IDPs is demonstrated by their vulnerability to diseases, stress and depression. IDPs did not only face challenges, but they also

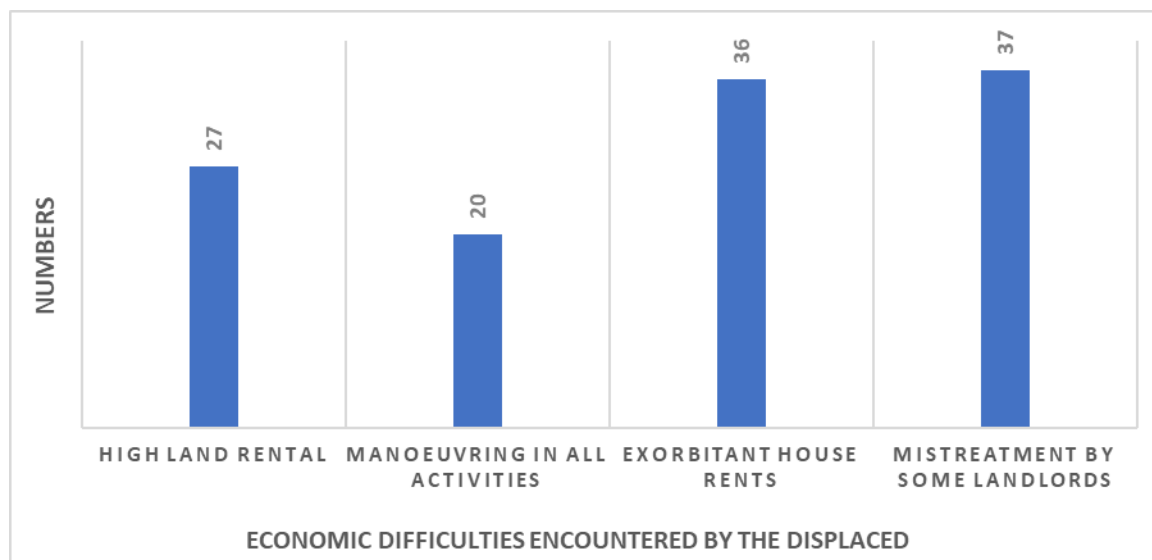
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<sup>2</sup> Though Bamenda is the headquarters of the English speaking North West region, its usage in this case is a subjugated way of describing English speaking which present them as primitive and low-class people. C.f Defyhatenow, 2020

<sup>3</sup> It is a daily work done by IDPs on the fields of landowners who pay them daily. The farms and everything are owned by natives and IDPs are employed on a daily basis to do meaner jobs for daily pay.

have resilience mechanism to cope with the challenges and integrate into the new environment. Figure 4 below is a graphical representation of the economic challenges faced by the IDPs.

**Figure 4: Economic challenges of IDPs in the Swiss farm of Edea I District**



**Source: Fieldwork survey**

#### **4. Resilience Mechanisms for Integration into Host Communities**

Displaced people have in a way, learned to live with hostile and discriminatory behaviours (including abuse, stigmatization and expressions of belittlement) of their host community counterparts. By dint of complaining, they realize that the problems raised are often not considered by the chief of the neighbourhood. It should be noted that the use of expressions such as "Bamenda go home" by residents is quite normal, and according to IDPs, contributes to socialization because they have developed mechanism to contain the stigma. However, in some cases, it reminds the IDPs of the suffering and trauma due to the conflict plaguing their regions of origin since 2016. Faced with language difficulties, the natives have created a language community made up of dialects spoken in English-speaking regions to facilitate their communications. Meanwhile, some IDPs also do everything to express themselves in French and learn a few words in the local language. The goal is to adapt and live like the locals.

At the social level, IDPs have a focus on the daily survival. They have created common initiative groups in order to protect their interests and empower one another. The organisation of the groups follows regional lines. As such, there is a group representing IDPs from the North West region and another body representing IDPs from South West region. Each has a chief who leads the group. This permits them to share their feelings and sustain their culture though distant from home. After presenting the resilience mechanism, it is important to analyse data.

#### **5. Discussion of Findings**

The findings indicate that the underlying challenge faced by IDPs is framed in culture and communication. This has rendered the integration of IDPs impossible as natives still consider

them strangers in their land. Balci (2018) argues that culture and communication are inseparable. He suggests that culture is embedded in communication. To demonstrate the importance of culture in daily life, Khan *et al.* (2012) notes that:

Culture is used to refer to all the activities of life whether these are social, physical, external or internal. Its material components include buildings, furniture, clothing, musical instruments and other tangible stuff. It is the sum total of all the tangible and intangible things including art and craft, customs and traditions, ideas, values, social and political norms and habits etc (p. 198)

The inability of IDPs to understand French, and the native languages including Bakoko and Bassa became an impediment to socialise in the new environment. Going by the definition the definition of Khan *et al.*, culture includes almost everything in life (*ibid*). As such, the life of IDPs in Edea I is embedded in the culture of the natives. The incapacity of IDPs to master the culture of the locals is also translated into an impossibility to live in Edea I District because their everyday living is sourced in the culture of the people, transmitted through patterns of communication which they do not understand.

Cole as cited in Owoeye and Dahunsi (2014) views communication as the process of creating, transmitting, and interpreting ideas, facts, opinion and feelings. It is a process of sharing, which is a mutual interchange between two or more persons. This therefore suggest that the communication impasse between the IDPs and natives is a major source of misunderstanding and even conflict in the community as ideas and notions cannot be meaningfully transmitted from one community to another. As such, though the two communities (IDPs and natives) live together, they are actually distant away, and this raises suspicion which can fan the flames of conflicts. Krauss and Morsella (n.d) notes that communication is at the heart of conflict in the society; when people communicate, they reduce the chances of conflict and also through communication, and conflict can be better managed. As such, some of the conflicts between IDPs and natives can easily be mitigating through an effective communication stream. Moreover, a smooth communication scheme between IDPs and natives could also maintain a harmonious atmosphere and integration for the latter.

The difficulties are real and the challenges enormous. Faced with their growing numbers (about a thousand of IDP), the natives sometimes fear being invaded or being dispossessed of their lands. Since most IDPs have lost their entire livelihoods, it makes them susceptible to any condition. This raises their appetite for economic opportunities in Edea1. Such desperation makes them to seek for any type of economic opportunities. Their manhunt for jobs and economic opportunities goes beyond the ordinary which makes natives to consider them IDPs as invaders. Moreover, natives complain that IDPs especially from the North West region are extremely hardworking which makes them amendable to more opportunities. As such, the situation in Edea 1 District is being transformed into a conflict between IDPs who are desperate for every opportunity and locals who feel they are being chased away in their own land. These social challenges could also be understood as the capacity integration of IDPs to the new environment.

The analysis has also revealed that one of the consequences of the influx of IDPs in Edea I District is the rise in insecurity and promiscuity. In most cases, IDPs are suspected to either promote these attitudes or victims of these happenings. Martin, an 11 years old boy who left the North West for Edea I with the elder brother soon became a thief as a means of subsistence In

several cases, he was accused of pilfering after joining groups of older boys taking drugs or looting. One IDP child put his experience in this way:

*“To survive, I seat close to “puf puf” traders using my magnet to withdraw money from baskets or a blade to make hols on ladies bags to pick money. This is how I do to survive even though must of the time I am beaten when they take me to the chief”* (interview with a young boy of 11, November 2022).

In some cases, the vulnerability of IDPs also makes them to provide an enabling platform for promiscuous activities. Many cases have been reported of teenage and unwanted pregnancies among IDP girls. An IDP girl narrates that:

*“I came here to stay with my aunty because my parents ran away to another direction, but my aunty is unable to feed me nor send me to school. That is how I got a boyfriend who promised to help my aunty and me. Now I have a baby and my boyfriend has abandoned me and left to another place”* (Interview with a 14 years old girl, November 2022).

These challenges and happening have become a challenge to social peace in the host community of Edea I District. The precariousness of IDPs in Edea I could be an essence of blockade to peace in this part of the country. As such, a new conflict has been created within an initial conflict; the original conflict being the “Anglophone Crisis” while a new conflict born out of the conflict is the breach of social peace in some host communities especially Edea I. Therefore, IDPs situation in Edea I District remains a great challenge to peace and security in that part of the Littoral region in Cameroon.

In the report of United Nations (2021) on Human rights approach needed for Internally Displaced Peoples’ housing (IDPs), land and property, the Special Rapporteur Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, says a more comprehensive approach on that engages humanitarian, development, peace, and climate stakeholders is needed to address the issue. She added that: *“addressing these issues cohesively can prevent and reduce displacement, save lives and improve the enjoyment by Internally Displaced Peoples’ to durable solutions that are sustainable within wider affected communities”* (Cecilia Jimenez-D. 2021). The only worry about this recommendation is to find out whether this strategy can be applied in all communities involved in conflicts related to population displacement.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis in this paper has brought out the fact that, challenges of integration of the “Anglophone” conflict-induced IDPs in host communities of Edéa I District remain a cause for concern not only to the IDPs themselves, but also to the local community and the authority. This study has unravelled a combination of challenging socio-economic factors responsible for the plight of IDPs living in Edea I. Based on these challenges, the following evidence-based recommendations are suggested:

- There is a need to create a well-organized environment involving those who are English speaking in Edea1 District to welcome people who are coming out of the community.
- The government or key stakeholders should build a centre to train displaced persons in income generating activities so as to make them have financial autonomy with handy activities and thus avoid the consequences of negative coping strategies such as prostitutions, early pregnancies...
- The Government in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders is encouraged to build Schools, libraries and health centres to help integrate children, sustain their education and

promote health care.

-Community leaders should promote intercultural exchanges such as marriage among the stakeholders to let flow the living together in the Edea 1 District community. The organization of intercultural days or events may also foster harmony among the communities. This may be an important tool to sustain peace in the District and the country as large.

- Language and cultural centres should also be promoted so that IDPs can learn new languages and cultures (including those of the host communities. This would also enable locals to embrace the culture of the IDPs and peacefully co-exist without fear and suspicions.

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