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Protection Update for the North-West and South-West Regions

February 2022



Figure 1 Awareness raising on GBV and Human rights in Fako © DRC 2021

I. Protection Environment

Some 358,657 people remained displaced within the two regions and 383, 596 are considered as returnees (Source OCHA, MSNA August 2021). Female population count for 54%, children for 60% of the total displaced population; elderly represents 10% of total population.

The protection environment in the months of January and February 2022 was marked by the tensions arising from the AFCON football competition, which was partially played in Limbe (Fako Division, South-west region). The organization of the sport event created multiple tensions between the SFF and the NSAG, which in turns affected the civilian population. NSAG were reported to threaten the civilian population willing to attend the games at the stadium or take part to the event in whatsoever form; in some instances the threat turned into physical assaults and abuses that have been on the rise this month. The heavy deployment of military forces during AFCON has led to a decrease of reported protection incidents this month both due to the increase of security presence but also to the impediments faced by humanitarian actors in conducting protection monitoring (i.e. roadblocks).

In the month of January, partners reported the killing of 11 civilians. Some of them can be attributed to the armed confrontations between the SFF and NSAGs in Bwitingi (Buea) on 12th January in relation to the NSAG having declared a lockdown on each day a match was played in Limbe stadium.

Armed clashes, roadblocks, lockdowns and roadblocks continued to affect the other divisions of the North-west and South-west. On 12th January in Buea, it is reported that seven boys and girls were stopped by the NSAG on their way to school, threatened at gun point and forced to strip naked while the perpetrators were filming. The images were shared on social media as a deterrent to other children to attend school.



In January, a total of **157 priority protection incidents** were reported by protection monitors mainly arbitrary arrest and unlawful detentions, as well as physical assault and abuses (DRC & IRC Protection Monitoring report, January 2022). Due to changes in funding and partnerships, protection actors carrying the protection monitoring activities are currently revising the allocation of geographical coverage, which may explain partially the low number of incidents reported this month.

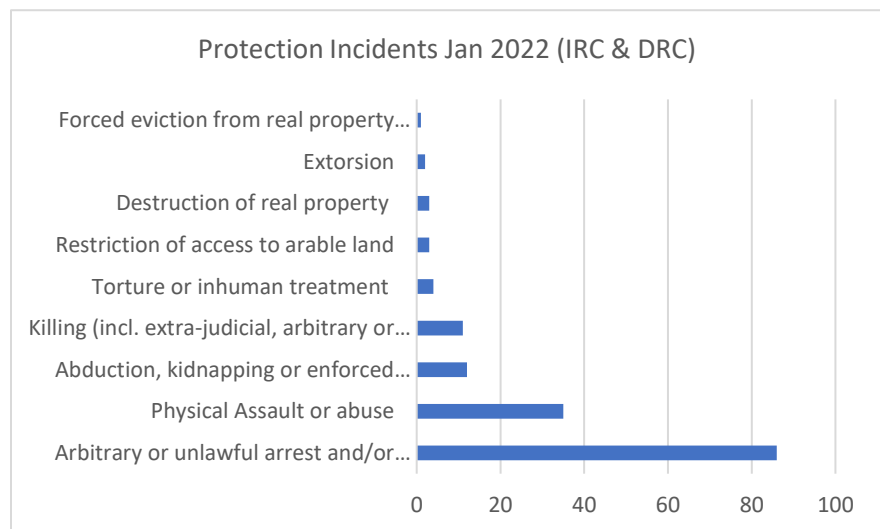
In addition, **GBVIMS** recorded a particularly high number GBV incidents in the month of January, mainly psychological violence, and denial of opportunities and services. The data is still being verified by the GBV AOR prior it can be confidently reported but the increase is attributed to two factors (i) the influx of refugees from Nigeria among which many GBV survivors have been identified and (ii) the emergency of new GBVIMS actors operating in hard-to-reach areas. GBV actors also partially explain the dramatic increase of reported GBV incidents by the awareness and sensitization activities carried during the 16 days of activism campaign, which have encouraged more survivors to speak out.

While a number of incidents of denial of opportunities and services is related to denied access to housing, land and property for women. Cluster and AOR coordinators are currently reviewing the GBVIMS questionnaire in order to include a breakdown that would allow to identify HLP-related incidents.

The vast majority of the GBV cases for January are recorded in the Donga-Mantung Division in the North-West (62%); in Lebialem (13% and Fako (11%) divisions in the South-West region.

II. Protection Incidents

In January 2022, Protection incidents recorded through protection monitoring activities amounted to **157** mainly arbitrary arrests or unlawful detentions (55%); physical assault or abuse (22%); abduction, kidnapping of enforced disappearance (8%); killing (incl. extra-judicial, arbitrary or summary execution) (7%); torture or inhuman treatment (3%); destruction of real property (2%). (Source: DRC & IRC, Protection Monitoring Report, Jan 2022).



This month, men and boys are the majority of the victims of the reported incidents (up to 70%) because they are usually the targets for arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention based on the perception that young men are supporters of the NSAGs and most often than not are undocumented. In the course of January, protection monitors recorded eight raids of the security and defense forces against communities, which usually end by arrests of boys



and young men for the reason mentioned above. Men are also the usual target for the kidnapping operated by the NSAG in order to collect ransoms.

In January, IRC assessed the coping mechanisms adopted by the 414 households interviewed in their zones of intervention (Meme, Fako, Ndian, Mezam and Momo divisions) (IRC, Protection Monitoring Report, January 2022). To cope with the lack of civil documentation 49% of the respondents said avoiding any location with checkpoints, creating a huge restriction on their freedom of movement; 15% approached humanitarian actors delivering civil documentation assistance; and another 5% reported having borrowed money in order to buy forged documents.

The fear of being arrested, detained or kidnapped is forcing many men and boys to limit their movement, which in turn affects their ability to access livelihood and employment. Even though data is not available, protection partners also assess that it increases the level of psychological distress of men and young men, notwithstanding the change in gender roles the crisis has already operated among the affected communities.

GBVIMS data is still being verified by the GBV AOR for the month of January. However once can already tell that GBV incidents seem to have affected the host community the most (53%), then IDPs (44%) and returnees (3%). This month, 88% of the identified survivors are female and 26% are children. Sexual violence against children is part of the grave violations of Child's Rights that are monitored and verified by the Child Protection AoR; and which report is shared regularly. Men and young men continue to be identified by GBV actors as survivors of violence (i.e. 12% this month), including sexual violence, however GBV against men and boys may be significantly underreported with lack of appropriate response as well.

The most recurrent forms of GBV committed against women, girls, men and boys are emotional abuse (31%); denial of resources, opportunities and services (22%); physical violence (20%); forced marriage (13%); sexual assault ((8%); and rape (5%). 83% of the survivors received psychosocial and/or psychological first aid and 10% of them benefited from referrals to other actors including for medical, mental health, child protection and legal assistance.

III. Key Protection Response

- 224 individuals (62% female) provided with legal assistance through the drafting of tenancy agreement to increase security of tenure and prevent forced eviction
- 2,507 adults and children reached with MHPSS (30% males and 70% females)
- 10,259 children referred by child protection community-based mechanisms (59% girls)
- 48,608 adults and children reached with Awareness Raising messages on CP, GBV and Covid-19 including 656 persons living with disability.
- 23,037 people reached by GBV intervention (54% females)
- 17,673 people sensitized on GBV and GBV risk mitigation
- 2,592 persons reached through awareness campaigns on the importance of civil documentation.

Due to funding constraints, few GBV partners provided legal and medical assistance to survivors with the exception of the rape clinical management.

IV. Persons with Specific Needs

In January, 2,466 vulnerable persons in need of targeted protection assistance received assistance. Due to capacity limitations and lack of expertise, the question of disability remains largely unaddressed in the protection analysis and response.



Key Messages:

➤ To the Humanitarian Country Team:

- To undertake discussion on the feasibility of roll out the Triple Nexus approach in the context of the North-west and South-west crisis

➤ To the donors:

- The protections risks highlighted in this month's report - such as the high number of cases of emotional violence and denial of opportunities against women, and also the number of cases at risk of forced eviction of rented housing – call for an increase of the funding of livelihood and income generating activities as part of a durable response to those risks.

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