



MODULE 7

Case Study Cameroon (Central Africa)

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MODULE AIMS

- To understand a case study from an officially bilingual African country.
- To present selected context factors for a country affected by two violent conflicts.
- To sensitize to the human story behind the numbers.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this module, in parallel to previous case studies so they are all internationally comparable, participants should be able:

- To thoughtfully debate migrants' choices and refugees' conclusions.
→ **Affective LO: Responding**
- To communicate effectively what recipients need to know about migration and forced displacement so they are empowered to make informed decisions.
→ **Cognitive LO: Understanding**
- To develop and implement a brief country profile and a brief profile on migration and forced displacement, using knowledge and databases. → **Cognitive LO: Applying**
- To analyse – from a global perspective – the country case study of Cameroon.
→ **Cognitive LO: Analysing**

Outline

Cameroon uniquely comprises both Anglophone and Francophone African history. Due to its construction out of one former British colony and one former French colony, Cameroon today is not only a bilingual country, but has two different legal systems, education systems and media spheres. Because of its ethnic, cultural and geographic diversity – Cameroon is home to more than 200 different ethnic groups – the country is often referred to as an *Africa in miniature*. Overlaying Cameroon's rich ethnic diversity is a legacy of the country's divided colonial history (MRGI, 2020) which links to massive internal displacements. Nyamnjoh (2010) reports that Cameroonian media regularly foster ethnic identities which also challenges nation building. Cameroon has a history of immigration, displaying *pull factors* such as apparent stability and economic prosperity, at least in the past (early 1950s, late 1960s, 1970s) and relative to neighbouring countries (International Crisis Group, 2010). These circumstances attracted migrant workers and refugees, mainly from Central and West Africa. For the past years, people who have been fleeing from the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, and from wars and conflicts in the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been and are being hosted here (Udelmann Rodrigues & Tomàs, 2012).

Cameroon showcases important factors that *push* people to migrate and/or seek refuge elsewhere, including conflict, terrorism, contested politics and limited press freedom. Cameroon also experiences gender injustice, high unemployment rates, a young and rapidly growing population with limited opportunities, high poverty rates and a significant diaspora network (IOM, 2009, pp. 27-35; p. 96). Two main conflicts precipitate displacements. In the Far North – the country’s poorest region – the Boko Haram armed insurgency has spilled over from Nigeria and has been conducting its operations from within Cameroon since 2014. The so-called Anglophone crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of the country represents a second cause for major displacements. It began in 2016 when authorities cracked down on Anglophone protesters. By 2018, the situation had escalated.

Country profile

Cameroon is situated in Central Africa,¹ bordering Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea and has coastlines with the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. The country’s regions formerly colonized by France gained independence in 1960. Today’s two Western provinces (North-West and South-West) voted to become independent from the United Kingdom one year later and formed a federal union with Francophone Cameroon. The country has a population of over 26 million people and is the second most populous country among its direct neighbours (between Nigeria with a population of 206 million and Chad with 16 million people; UNDESA 2019a, pp. 23-35). As is the case throughout Africa, Cameroon’s population is young: The median age of the total population is 19 years (in line with sub-Saharan Africa²; UNDESA, 2020). The population growth of 2.61 % annually (2015-2020) is also in line with the sub-Saharan average (excluding high-income countries; World Bank, 2020f; UNDESA 2019a, p. 57). The fertility rate (births per woman) is at 4.6 children per woman, slightly lower than the sub-Saharan average (excluding high-income countries) of 4.72 and double the average global rate of 2.47 children per woman (2015-2020). It has decreased from 5.75 children per woman (1995-2000) (UNDESA 2019a, p. 137; World Bank, 2020b). In 2018, life expectancy for women was 60 years (compared to 63 years in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding high-income countries), for men 58 years (compared to 59 years in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding high-income countries), up from 53 (women) and 50 (men) in 2000 (UNDESA, 2019a, pp. 186-187; World Bank, 2020c; World Bank, 2020d). These developments indicate important progress yet challenges do persist: The country’s “poverty reduction rate is lagging behind its population growth [...] the overall number of poor people increased by 12% to 8.1 million between 2007 and 2014”, and poverty is increasingly concentrated in the Northern regions, with 56 % of poor living here (World Bank, 2019). Population growth and the youth bulge is supposed to be translated into the “demographic dividend” in

1 Note the different definitions of Central Africa (sometimes listed as Middle Africa): The region comprises Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon for the AfDB whereas the UN also counts in Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe.

2 In comparison, the median age of the total population in Europe is 42.5 years, in Latin America and the Caribbean 31 years (UNDESA, 2020).

Cameroon (African Union, 2017) and young people have their own ideas how to go about this (Nyingi, 2019). In 2015, radio host Richard Onanena, a journalist for Kalak FM radio in Yaoundé, told the World Bank that “there is a real need for a government reform of the education system to address unemployment amongst youth” (World Bank, 2015). These calls to include youth in planning and policy making remain on the agenda.

Young people often perceive their life opportunities as limited. The song “White Collar” by the Cameroonian band Prolific Dream Revolution highlights the level of economic hardship with difficult access to the job market, resulting in precarious living conditions and low social security: *“Man get degree for law ooohh, but ei di push ei na truck!/Man get masters for medicine eh, but ei di sell na achombo!!”*³ (Prolific Dream Revolution 237, 2018). Around 6% of Cameroon’s youth (age group 15 to 24 years) have been unemployed in the past decade which is, however, better than the sub-Saharan context with a youth unemployment rate of around 12% since 2010 (World Bank, 2020e).

Cameroon’s political system is a unitary republic with an executive president, a position first held by Ahmadou Ahidjo from 1960 to 1982, and by Paul Biya for the past almost four decades. Morse (2018) explains that Cameroon is a “dominant-presidential system”, in line with the “resilience of African electoral authoritarianism” (Morse, 2018, pp. 114-115). Cameroon has a low level of democracy in the global comparison (ranking 142 of 167 countries), displaying in 2020 the lowest scores since 2006 (EIU, 2020, pp. 10-14, p. 21, p. 43; V-Dem Institute, 2020; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, p. 5).

Political parties were legalized in 1990 after “persistent popular and international pressure” (Morse, 2018, p. 122). In 2008, the presidential term limits were abolished (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, p. 5) following which the then president was able to run again, and he was re-confirmed in the two ensuing presidential elections of 2011 and 2018. The results of the 2018 presidential election remain highly contested as with the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2020 and a source of conflict (International Crisis Group, 2020). Anglophone separatists had called for boycotts of these polls. The Bertelsmann Stiftung (2020, p. 3) notes a reported 10% turnout rate in English-speaking regions, other observers note only 5% (International Crisis Group, 2020, pp. 9-10).

Cameroon possesses rich natural resources including gas, oil, minerals, fertile land, and a hospitable climate for growing a large variety of crops. However, the country is ranked 153 of 180 countries in the corruption index of Transparency International (2020). It assumes a low position in the medium human development-category of the HDI with a ranking of 150 of 189 countries (UNDP, 2019, pp. 300-303). Regarding the migration-development nexus, personal remittances increased noticeably over the past two decades, from \$15 million in 1999, \$185 million in 2009 to

3 “Someone might get a degree in law but ends up pushing a truck. Someone else gets a Masters in medicine, but ends up selling achombo” (deep-fried buns eaten with beans or sauces; translation by authors).

\$334 million in 2019. But they declined to an estimated \$319 million in 2020 (World Bank, 2020g), presumably caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020a). Remittances represent less than 1% of GDP (in the African context, this is a low value; World Bank, 2020g) while over one quarter of respondents in a recent study reported being in some way dependent on them (McMahon & Kalantaryan, 2020, p. 14). Cameroon is a low middle-income country with sharp regional differences. Poverty, for instance, is deteriorating in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions.

Migration profile

The first Africa Migration Report, published by the AU and the IOM, does not particularly elaborate on migration from or to Cameroon. It only generically refers to the fact that “[g]lobally, over two thirds of African countries were in the top 10 of new conflict-related internal displacements”, including Cameroon (Adepoju et al., 2020, pp. 54-55). Afrobarometer, in its analysis “Updating the narrative about African migration” (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018)⁴, concludes that on average more than one-third of Africans (37%) have at least considered emigration to another country, including nearly one in five (18%) who have given it “a lot” of thought (see Module 9; Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018, p. 2). Fewer respondents from Cameroon (14%) than from sub-Saharan African (37%) have given emigration “a lot” of thought (rank 13 of 34 for Cameroon), 26% considered emigration “somewhat/a little bit” and 59% “not at all” (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018, p. 3; Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 5).

In 2019, Cameroon had a migrant stock⁵ of 506,000, representing 2% of the population, slightly less than 2017 (540,000). The net migration rate – immigrants entering Cameroon minus emigrants leaving the country – is at minus 24,000 (Migration Data Portal, 2021).

Immigration: A period of relative stability and economic potential in the second half of the 20th century attracted migrant workers, circular migrants⁶ and permanent settlers. The situation deteriorated in the 2010s when conflicts (Boko Haram insurgency; Anglophone crisis) started to weaken the internal stability. Nonetheless, a Gallup survey across 146 countries in 2011 showed that 84% of Cameroonian respondents believe their country to be a good place for immigrants to live in. This response exceeds response rates from sub-Saharan Africa (66%) but the region still ranks third after the Americas and Europe (Wu & Ray, 2012). On the World Happiness Index, too,

4 The analysis is based on official figures and surveys conducted between 2016 and 2018, asking more than 45,000 Africans in 34 countries how they see and think about migration according to Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca (2018, p. 2).

5 Statistics refer to international migrant stocks. Stocks include all foreign-born residents in a country regardless of when they entered the country. For countries where data on the foreign-born population are not available, UNDESA uses data on foreign citizens. As such, the number of international migrants may not include second-generation migrants that were born in the country but have parents who migrated. Stock data should also not be confused with annual migration flow data (i.e. the number of migrants that entered or left a country within one year). For definition, see glossaries recommended in Module 2 (IOM, 2019; EMN, 2018).

6 For a definition of circular migration, see glossaries recommended in Module 2 (EMN, 2018; IOM, 2019).

Cameroonians are upbeat (rank 98 of 153), assuming a 2-digit ranking along with Ivory Coast, Benin, Congo and Ghana (Helliwell et al., pp. 20-22).

Refugees and asylum seekers in Cameroon: UNHCR (2020a) reports around 2 million persons of concern in Cameroon by November 2020, including over 430,000 refugees from the three main countries of origin of the Central African Republic (310,000), Nigeria (117,000) and Chad (2,000). Most refugees, however, do not seek asylum in Cameroon (see Module 3, Module 9). The discrepancy between the high number of refugees and the low number of asylum seekers is noticeable: In 2019, only 7,400 asylum seekers were from the Central African Republic while 293,000 refugees from the Central African Republic were registered under UNHCR's mandate in the same year. Likewise, from Nigeria only 54 asylum seekers were registered besides 111,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2020c). The NGO Human Rights Watch laments non-compliance with the African Union's Refugee Convention by referencing forcible return of Nigerian asylum seekers since 2015 (Human Rights Watch, 2019a, p. 118).

Internal displacement (IDPs): An estimated 710,000 people under UNHCR's mandate have been displaced due to conflict and violence in the North-West/South-West regions and 320,000 in the Far North region (UNHCR, 2020a). The IDMC (2020) also reports almost one million IDPs due to conflict and violence by the end of 2019 and 80,000 new displacement in the first half of 2020. But these data is often 'guesstimates' (see Module 2). Data collection and dissemination are inadequate both on internal displacement and cross-border movements, very little data on the impact of the conflicts is available. In September 2019, the IDMC was "still unable to say with any certainty how many people had lost their homes, how many children were not attending school or how many families had been separated in 2019" (André et al., p. 50).

Refugees from Cameroon: Because the country was previously known for its relative stability, the numbers of refugees from Cameroon were stable at around 10,000 in the early 2010s. By 2018 they had increased to 45,000 refugees and in 2019 they rose to 66,000. Destination countries are mainly Nigeria (52,000), followed by the USA (5,000) and Italy (2,200) while the top countries of asylum are in Europe and North America (UNHCR, 2020b).

Emigration: Afrobarometer concludes from its survey that the "[y]oung and educated Africans [are] most likely to consider moving abroad" (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 1). Almost a fifth (18%) of the Cameroonian respondents in the age group 18 to 25 years consider emigration "a lot", compared to 14% across all age groups (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 5, Figure 2; p. 7, Figure 5; p. 27, Table A.2). An aggregate of 4% of all Cameroonian respondents are making preparations for emigration, 16% are considering to do so in the next year or two, 20% have no current plans and 59% do not consider emigrating (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 9, Figure 6; p. 10, Figure 7). If they "were to move to another country", 12% of Cameroonian respondents would choose a country within the region, 8% elsewhere in Africa, 26% Europe, 33% North America (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 13, Figure 11). The majority of Cameroonian respondents

report the desire to “find work” as their main reason to consider emigration (35%), followed by the wish to “escape poverty/economic hardship” (24%) and to pursue an education (10%). Only a minority of the respondents note that they wish to find democracy/freedoms (3%) or peace/security (6%; Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 15, Figure 13; p. 16, Table 1). While most respondents wish to move within their home region and opt for movements across borders to be free (56% of Cameroonian respondents), they find it difficult or very difficult to cross international borders (60%; Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 20, Figure 17; p. 21, Figure 18). The authors of the Afrobarometer study conclude that “far fewer are actually making plans to leave, of course” (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019, p. 2) but alert to the fact that if all those who think about leaving were to do so, the country would experience large losses in their youth population (see Module 9). Jobard (2019) shows the hardship of an irregular (“clandestine”)⁷ migrant in a photo feature story.



SUGGESTION FOR AN EXERCISE TO ADDRESS THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF APPLYING AND ANALYSING AND TO ADDRESS THE AFFECTIVE SKILLS OF RESPONDING:

Allow the class to acquire some knowledge of Cameroon as a country of migration and forced displacement before studying the country’s pull and push factors.

Invite participants to prepare a short country profile and a short profile on migration and forced displacement of Cameroon.

- To compose these two profiles, participants select their data from the sources shown in Module 2, particularly the Migration Data Portal country page on Cameroon (Migration Data Portal, 2021).
- To bring the data to life, participants explore media reports from or about Cameroon, which they consider enlightening and telling.
- Present the two profiles in plenary and conclude with five highlights to identify the top characteristics for Cameroon.

SUGGESTION FOR THE CLASSROOM TO ADDRESS THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF UNDERSTANDING:

Task the participants to describe which aspects of the country profile are relevant for which audiences, particularly regarding those aspects that empower them to make informed decisions on migration and forced displacement.

⁷ For definitions of irregular, illegal or clandestine migration, see the glossaries recommended in Module 2 (EMN, 2018; IOM, 2019).

Selected context factors

Conflict: Conflict is one of the main factors that push people to migrate (see Module 3). Women are especially vulnerable to situations of conflict (see section Gender of this handbook, and the gender part in this Module) as Zenn & Pearson (2014) show for the Boko Haram's systematic gender-based violence. In Cameroon, two major conflicts precipitate displacement, the Anglophone crisis and the Boko Haram insurgency. Human rights violations are widespread (Human Rights Watch, 2019a; Human Rights Watch, 2019b).

Boko Haram insurgency: The words "Boko Haram", translated from Hausa into English, mean "Western Education is Sinful" (Zenn & Pearson, 2014, p. 46). The group that goes by this name has stated as one of its ideological objectives to introduce Islamic law (Sharia) across its territory. The armed group is based in northeastern Nigeria and has spread to neighbouring countries including Chad, Niger and Cameroon. Since 2014, the insurgent group has carried out attacks in Cameroon's Far North region. Cameroon is the second most-affected country by the violence and insecurity linked to Boko Haram, after Nigeria. At least 17 civilians were killed in an attack on the town of Nguetechewe in August 2020 when the Islamist group used "apparent children as suicide bombers to attack displaced people [which] is a grossly repugnant war crime" (Human Rights Watch, 2020, pp. 175-176). This attack followed a major rise in violent incidents since the beginning of 2020, with almost daily killings, kidnappings, and destruction of property attributed to Boko Haram. In addition, the region is affected by food insecurity and a lack of economic opportunities. Conflict exacerbates widespread human insecurity with economic, food, health, educational and environmental hardships (Abel et al., 2019; Lundy & Adebayo, 2016). While the conflict with Boko Haram "has diminished significantly", according to the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2020, p. 7), the Islamist group remains active, and "numerous vigilante groups [...] arose in self-defence" against Boko Haram, as the government re-deployed military forces from these areas to the Anglophone regions (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, pp. 7-8).

Anglophone crisis: The Anglophone conflict is "one of the world's most neglected crises" (André et al., 2019, p. 14) that triggered 20 times more displacement than the Boko Haram insurgency, posits the IDMC. This crisis is severely underreported and thereby humanitarian and development interventions are underfunded (André et al., 2019, p. 8; IDMC, 2019). Tamfu (2018) describes some of the hardships.

Education is at the heart of this conflict, with French being the language of instruction at schools for the Anglophone populations. Sondo (2020) narrates the difficulties for an English speaking student and journalist to study and research in predominantly French-based institutions. Numbers of Anglophone Cameroonians feel underrepresented in the country, systematically neglected by the central government and economically disadvantaged (IDMC, 2019; Manih, 2018). Addressing the violence "under mounting international pressure" (International Crisis Group, 2020, p. 6), the

government initiated a national dialogue in autumn 2019 but made only “minor concessions” following which the Anglophone separatists boycotted the event and “stepped up their campaign of violence” (International Crisis Group, 2020, p. 7). Access to education, medical care and services is lower in the Anglophone areas than elsewhere in the country. The Southern Cameroon Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) declared an independent republic in 2017, which was cracked down by the government (Human Rights Watch, 2019a).

Press Freedom: The constitution guarantees press freedom, explains Ngangum (2020), but “there is limited optimism for press freedom, and the role of the media in democratization” (Ngangum, 2020, p. 10). The country’s media freedom ranking is declining, down to a rank of 134 of 180 countries in 2020 from rank 131 in 2019 and rank 129 in 2018 (Reporters Without Borders, 2020a; Reporters Without Borders, 2020b; CPJ, & ESCR-Net, n.d.).

Cameroon has two news agencies, the English language Cameroon News Agency, and the French Agence Cameroun Presse. The BBC shares a selection of most influential media outlets, pointing to “a busy media environment” with state-run CRTV, radio networks, “dozens of private radio and TV stations and hundreds of press titles” (The BBC, 2019). Tita & Wantchami (2016, p. 3) point to a decline in professional standards: “Standard principles of reporting such as accuracy and fairness, integrity are not respected [...] media practitioners have low integrity and are corrupt”. Low salaries and poor working conditions serve as an explanation. The media is being portrayed as either under strict government control (state media) or often intimidated (private media). Newspapers have been banned, journalists sanctioned, prosecuted for defamation and for “insulting the presidency” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, p. 11). The 2014 anti-terror bill has been applied to restrict covering government activities during the fight against Boko Haram and the Anglophone crisis (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020). As the possibilities of independent reporting in the media decreased, the use of social media increased – and the government including its supporters also embarked upon the social media to spread their messages. Social media use is surging: 23% of the population is using the internet (2019; World Bank, 2020h), with 59% using smartphones to access the internet (International Crisis Group, 2020). Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Cameroon (International Crisis Group, 2020, pp. ii-iii; pp. 23-26).

The harassment of journalists is increasing, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (see Figure 20). News anchor Samuel Wazizi, imprisoned since 2 August 2019, was accused of collaborating with Anglophone separatists and spreading separatist information. He died in a military hospital in Yaoundé in June 2020. UNESCO (2020) urged investigations into his death, calling “on the authorities to shed light on the events that led to Wazizi’s demise and ensure that any contravention to his rights as a journalist and as a detainee are brought to justice.”

The internet was shut down in the Anglophone regions for 240 days in 2017 and 2018. Whenever possible, people created ways around the ban, used Virtual Private Networks (VPNs; Kenmogne,

n. d., p. 2); wrote their emails on their mobile phones which friends carried to Francophone parts of the country where the emails would send (Kingsley, 2019); initiated the “Internet refugee camp”, a space with internet coverage where people passed by to connect (Kenmogne, n.d., p. 3). The government justified the ban with “the propagation of false information on social media capable of inciting hate and violence in the crisis-hit regions” (Mukeredzi, 2017). The “misinformation” argument, human rights activists in Cameroon posit, began as a government explanation for internet shutdowns but has become a “real problem that everyone has to contend with” (Marchant & Stremlau, 2020, p. 4332).

Shutting down the internet not only “violates international law [and] [...] suppresses public debate, [...] deprives Cameroonians of access to essential services and basic resources”,⁸ the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, David Kaye, stated in 2017 (CIPESA, 2017, p. 6). It also significantly impacts the economy. The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) calculates that Cameroon lost almost US \$40 million in 93 days of shutdown in 2017 (CIPESA, 2017, pp. 21-22). The loss particularly impacted Silicon Mountain, a technology center in the South-West Anglophone region (Kenmogne, n. d.). Globally operating businesses were unable to reach their partners and lamented that “[m]oney is being lost” (Mukeredzi, 2017). Kenmogne (n. d.) narrates the 93 days of blackout in 2017, sharing the experiences of an ICT teacher who was unable to register students for Technovision Challenges; a mother, residing abroad, disconnected from her children; a researcher, cut off her online studies. They say that the shutdown angered people and increased tensions. Digital rights NGOs – Internet Sans Frontières and Access Now – sued the Cameroonian government for imposing the shutdown in the two Anglophone regions (Access Now, 2018).

Media NGOs alerted the world to the case of radio journalist Mancho Bibixy, who was arrested in 2017 on terrorism charges after he advocated for Anglophone rights and sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment (CPJ, 2020b).

The Global Journalist’s “Project Exile” portraits the struggle of journalists to survive in their home country and in exile, for instance Cameroonian cartoonist Ako Eyong or Charles Atangana, a former investigative reporter (Beaton, 2018; Ethiemere, 2017). The woman journalist Mimi Mefo Takambou received the Freedom of Expression Awards in the journalism category (Index on Censorship, 2019). She is a reporter and first-ever woman chief editor of the English service of a private media outlet in Cameroon, and established her own news platform (Mimimefo, n. d.; English Pen, 2020).

8 The UN Human Rights Council, in the Resolution adopted on 5 July 2018, “[c]ondemns unequivocally” measures in violation of international human rights law that prevent or disrupt an individual’s ability to seek, receive or impart information online, calls upon all States to refrain from and to cease such measures” (UNGA, 2018, p. 3; p. 5, para 13). The Resolution highlights that the internet needs to “remain global, open and interoperable”, that states are expected to refrain from “undue restriction of freedom of opinion and expression online” including those states that have “manipulated or suppressed online expression in violation of international law”. Para 12 is a reminder to provide “a safe and enabling online environment” that allows journalists to “perform their work independently and without undue or unlawful interference” (UNGA, 2018, pp. 4-5).

Mimi Mefo, Paul Chouta and Boris Bertolt are three political bloggers with over 100,000 followers each on their social media platforms (two live abroad and one is in jail in Cameroon; International Crisis Group, 2020, p. 16).

Figure 20: Journalists at risk in Cameroon since 1992



Media NGOs like Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists as well as UNESCO alert the international community to journalists at risk. Source: CPJ (2020a). Own illustration.



SUGGESTION FOR AN EXERCISE TO ADDRESS THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF APPLYING AND ANALYSING AND TO ADDRESS THE AFFECTIVE SKILLS OF RESPONDING:

Assign participants to identify and outline two selected context factors – two push factors or two pull factors or a combination of one each – for Cameroon.

- In order to identify two context factors, participants use Module 3 of this handbook. Ideally, participants will also introduce new context factors as the listing of Module 3 is not inclusive.
- Bringing the conditions to life that prompt Cameroonians to leave their homes and others to turn to Cameroon, participants explore media reports or testimonials.
- Presenting their selected context factors in plenary, participants will attempt to strike a balance between theory and the human element behind the theory.

Gender

Gender is one of the most important factors to determine motives, experiences, priorities and conditions of migration and forced displacement (see section Gender in this handbook). The UNHCR says that women refugees “who are unaccompanied, pregnant, heads of households, disabled or elderly are especially vulnerable” (UNHCR, 2020d). Women fleeing English-speaking areas of Cameroon for Nigeria face a lack of work in Nigerian reception facilities and a higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as domestic violence, but many incidents go unreported (UNHCR, 2018).

Gender equality is inscribed in Cameroon’s constitution (Njikem, 2017), and it is part of government policy, with the National Gender Policy (NGPC) as “a foundational guiding and reference document [...] [that intends] to promote an egalitarian and equitable society” (Mefire et al., 2017, p. 37). Women’s representation in parliament has increased since 1997 (World Bank, 2021), but it “remains low overall with significant differences between national and local levels” (UN Women, n.d.) and the women parliamentarians’ work is largely affected by “party discipline and the parliamentary system” (Fokum & Fonjong, 2018, p. 754). Women’s political participation is essential for sustainable development and to alleviate poverty (Fokum & Fonjong, 2018, p. 755; Mefire et al., 2017, p. 37; see Module 3), especially in a country where 51 % of women live below the poverty line compared to 39 % of the national population; only 53 % of girls (65 % of boys) are enrolled in secondary school; 43 % of women in partnerships face domestic violence (OCHA, 2019).

In comparison with neighbouring countries of the same medium human development group⁹, Cameroon bodes relatively well on rank 140 of the Gender Inequality Index compared to Congo (145; no data for Equatorial-Guinea; UNDP, 2019, p. 318). In the comparison of its two neighbours in the medium human development group, Cameroon has a lower adolescent birth rate, has higher rates of women in parliament, and a higher rate of women participating in the labour force. On the other hand, Cameroon falls short in terms of women and men with at least some secondary education. Indicators report for Cameroon almost 600 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to 440 in Congo and 340 in Equatorial-Guinea (data from 2015; UNDP, 2019, p. 318). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is prohibited in the national legislation and the performance is criminalized (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018). The legal age of marriage is 18 for women and men. Some observers consider Cameroon’s efforts to be “key strides toward gender equality and women’s empowerment” (Njikem, 2017). Others address the challenges in implementing existing legislation that aims to achieve gender equality and to prevent violence against women girls, men and boys, to provide protection and justice for the victims (UN Women, n.d.). Economically, too, equality for women is still on the agenda. While women are, in many ways, the backbone of the economy, they are still largely marginalized and are even “more dependent on men economically than in precolonial or traditional times” (Nana-Fabu, 2006, p. 148).

9 In 2019, Congo assumes rank 138 on the HDI, Equatorial-Guinea assumes rank 144, and Cameroon rank 150 (UNDP, 2019, p. 302).

For 2019, the UN reports around 194,000 women and 189,000 men migrating from Cameroon – more women than men migrate from Cameroon (Migration Data Portal, 2021). Since 1990, both groups increasingly chose high-income countries, more developed regions and European destination countries over sub-Saharan African destination countries. The number of women migrants from Cameroon has increased from 1990 to 2019 by almost 250%, with a particularly steep rise in the 2000s. While in 1990, the majority of women migrated to less developed regions (54%) compared to more developed regions (46%), this pattern is now reversed: 68% of the women migrants from Cameroon move to more developed regions (men: 60%). Over the years, they have continuously preferred high-income countries over middle- or low-income countries, but the proportion has become more pronounced: In 1990, 45% of women migrated to high-income countries and 27% to middle- and low-income countries respectively, while in 2019 68% of the women migrated to high-income countries, 21% to middle-income countries and only 11% to low-income countries. The preferred destination region is Europe (50% of all women migrating from Cameroon in 2019; men: 40%), followed by Africa (32%) and Northern America (18%), and this trend with a preference for Europe intensified between 1990 and 2019: In 1990, 43% of women migrated to Europe compared to 50% in 2019 while in 1990 54% of women migrated within Africa compared to 32% in 2019. In Africa, most Cameroonian women migrate to Gabon (21,000 in 2019), Chad (18,577 in 2019), and Nigeria (12,717; UNDESA, 2019b, Table 2, Table 3).

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are main destinations for migrant women from Central and West Africa, who are frequently employed as domestic workers (IOM, 2018). In search for jobs and aspiring to bring “pride and respect” (Malit & Oliver, 2020, p. 130) to the family through international labour migration, women migrants to the GCC countries have reported abuses (Chimtom, 2015; Ebo’o & Oyono, 2019) which prompted efforts to stop the trafficking (Kindzeka, 2016). Stories of “Mirabel” from the Cameroon’s Anglophone region (she went to Dubai on a tourist visa, expecting to work in her teaching profession, but only found work as an assistant teacher) match those of “Susan” who expected to work as a nurse in Kuwait and ended up as a domestic worker (Chimtom, 2015; Malit & Oliver, 2020).

In Europe, Cameroonian women are mostly migrating to the French speaking countries France (57,000 in 2019), Belgium (10,000) and Switzerland (5,000), and to the English-speaking United Kingdom (5,000); Germany (7,700 women migrants in 2019; see Module 8) and Italy (6,500 women migrants in 2019) are also prime destinations (UNDESA, 2019b, Table 3). In Germany, the proportion of women migrants from Cameroon has been rising over the years, and the diaspora’s “key role” in Cameroon’s development process has long been acknowledged (GTZ, 2007, pp. 8-9).

Getting to Europe is not an easy endeavor, as Frías (2019) shows. She introduces “Mireille” from Cameroon, the first African woman to surmount the fence between Melilla (Spain) and Morocco,

who shared experiences of her long journey from Cameroon to the Spanish enclave with the media. She had not been abused or harassed during her migration journey across Africa, and had decided for the unknown because “[e]ven if we go to school and get a diploma there is nothing for us to do” (Frías, 2019, p. 172). The second African woman to surmount the fence in Melilla was also a Cameroonian woman, “Astan”, twelve weeks pregnant. Tatiana Kanga, also from Cameroon, navigated the continental route, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, nine months pregnant (Frías, 2019). For many women, migration is a way to “increase access to productive assets”, explains the IOM (2020). Why do they go? Alpes (2017), based upon her extensive ethnographic fieldwork, emphasizes that “migration aspirations [...] touch young Cameroonians from wealthier as well as poorer families from all walks of life and with varying levels of education. Both men and women succeed in getting financial support from their families to try to migrate” (Alpes, 2017, p. 306), and the strongest is “destined to become a migrant” (Alpes, 2017, p. 313), man or woman. Just as young people in Guinea-Bissau migrate in search for the “Ideal Elsewhere” (Ramsey-Kurz & Ganapathy-Doré, 2011; see Module 6), this seems to be the case when Kanga exclaims “It’s Europe!” (Frías, 2018, p. 174). But not all migration ends with the desired access to productive assets. Those who are disillusioned and wish to return home may benefit from return and reintegration programmes, implemented by the IOM (2020). At home, returning women like “Rafiatou” from Cameroon share experiential knowledge with potential migrants because “young women and girls must know what the risks are along the way” (IOM, 2020).

As is generally the case (see Module 3), Cameroonian women, too, are obligated to meet the expectations of the investors at home – family and community members – who “usually arrange initial contact with the ‘travel agent’s or smugglers [and] [...] pay these people” (Mixed Migration Center, 2018, p. 36). In her ethnographic field work conducted over six years between 2007 and 2013, Alpes (2017) uncovered the interdependencies between migrant women, their families and brokers in Cameroon, and is able to show how complex migrant decision and dependency-networks are.



SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENT TO ADDRESS THE AFFECTIVE SKILLS OF RESPONDING AND THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF APPLYING:

Ask your participants to outline internal displacement in Cameroon.

- Consult the resources that have been introduced, for instance the Migration Data Portal (Migration Data Portal, 2021), the Human Development Indicators (UNDP, 2019c) or media reports (The New Humanitarian, 2020).
- Present the numbers and causes for internal displacement, using the above sources, including the databases provided by the IDMC, the UNHCR and IOM on Cameroon's IDP populations. Outline the factors that push people out of their homes to safer places in Cameroon – and describe the reasons why they do not cross international borders.
- Make the situations of internal displacement tangible – use photos, videos or other media.

SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENT TO ADDRESS THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSING:

Provide a report about Cameroon and IDPs, migrants or refugees using your local or international media. Each participant should elaborate on important aspects for Cameroon and identify information that empowers the audiences to make informed decisions about migration and forced displacement.



RECOMMENDED READING:

Academic:

Global Journalist (2020). *Project Exile*. Retrieved January 22, 2020, from <https://globaljournalist.org/2018/01/8964/>

Journalistic:

Jobard, O. (2019). *From Cameroon to France: Travel Journal of a Clandestine Immigrant* (Moving Walls). New York, Washington D.C., London: Open Society Foundation. Retrieved January 21, 2020, from <https://www.movingwalls.org/moving-walls/13/cameroon-france-travel-journal-clandestine-immigrant.html>

Institutional:

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, & UNHCR (2012). *Cameroon: Corruption of journalists. The falsification of newspaper articles for the purpose of refugee claims*. Retrieved January 21, 2020, from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4f9e37342.html>

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