



NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL

Photo: Pouhe Patricia/NRC

# LEGAL AND CIVIL DOCUMENTATION RESPONSE IN CAMEROON

April 2024

# A LONG WAY TO GO FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE

Despite all the efforts being made to strengthen resilience, Internally Displaced People in Cameroon are still facing several challenges, including limitations on freedom of movement. **They are frequently asked for identity documents to access public services or to register their children.** Most displaced persons cannot produce such documents as they lost them during the displacement - or they never had them in the first place — preventing them from claiming and enjoying their rights fully.

These barriers are not exclusive to displacement contexts, but the specific vulnerabilities of displaced persons make them even more consequential as lack of identity and civil documentation is one of the major protection challenges identified among people affected by the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon.

**A survey conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in August 2020 showed that 92% of the population in the Northwest and Southwest regions have faced or were facing difficulties in obtaining birth certificates, and 80% were prevented from obtaining National Identity Cards.** Based on these findings, since January 2021, NRC has been carrying out interventions in these regions to help displacement affected populations to access legal and civil documentation and improve their protection. However, the need remains high following persistent violence and continuous displacement. **A Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment conducted by IOM in September 2022 showed that lack of civil documentation remains one of three top protection issues that was reported in 40% of the locations assessed in the Northwest and Southwest regions.** The assessment also showed that people without identity and other civil documentation are exposed to many protection risks including restrictions on movements, arbitrary arrests, and detention as reported by 37% of interviewed people in the assessed locations.

Refugees from the Central African Republic residing in the East and Adamawa regions have enormous humanitarian needs, with civil documentation being one of the main one. The refugees have diminished access to essential services because they lack civil documentation. **For the past ten years, many CAR refugees in Cameroon continue to give birth to children with most of the births not registered, hence the inability for them to obtain birth certificates for their children either from Cameroon or from their country of origin.** Assessment reports show that most of the refugees do not know the procedures for obtaining civil documentation while others do not simply see the importance of possessing documentation. **In 2023, 190,000 children of school age in the East region were identified without a birth certificate.**

**People keep facing enormous challenges trying to access civil documentation due to the gaps in the civil status system.** The situation is aggravated in the crisis-affected regions, especially in the Far North, Northwest and Southwest where some civil status centers are non-functional owing to destruction by armed groups, while some are closed as civil status registrars and other personnel fled the area. **Nevertheless, the demand for civil documentation remains high, especially among refugees and IDPs.**

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has over 20 years of experience in Legal and Civil Documentation (LCD) in more than 30 countries in the world under its Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Program.

In Cameroon, NRC's activities on LCD began in 2017 with focus on displacement affected populations in the Far North, East, Adamawa, West, Littoral, Northwest and Southwest regions.

The response aims to improve access to LCD for target populations by legally empowering them to obtain documentation and enjoy protection. The possession of documentation would also help to increase their access to education, employment, financial services, housing, land and property and other essential services.

To achieve this, NRC provides legal services through Legal Mobile Clinics and covers all costs involved in the processing documentation.

## APPROACH AND INTERVENTIONS

### Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance

- Provision of information / sensitization on LCD rights and remedies through information sessions, awareness campaigns, information, education and communication (IEC) materials and radio broadcast;
- Provision of individual counselling on LCD in Legal Mobile Clinics to people who have specific challenges with exercising their rights to legal identity;
- Provision of legal assistance – building files and facilitating the process for declaratory judgements, including costs, and accompanying persons concerned to competent offices.

### Research & Advocacy

- Conduct of studies and assessments to inform civil documentation response;
- Implementation of evidence-based advocacy with stakeholders for improvement of laws, policies and practices affecting access to legal and civil documentation (meetings with stakeholders, dialogue Sessions, briefing notes, dissemination of program evidence).

### Coordination & Partnerships

- Organization and co-facilitation of civil documentation platform meetings in the Far North with MINDEVEL and BUNEC and support to other platforms in other regions;
- Support and participation to joint supervision missions with BUNEC and MINDEVEL;
- Engagement of LNGOs as Implementing Partners for civil documentation interventions;
- Collaboration with government technical services.

### Capacity building

- Institutional strengthening through support with working materials and equipment to boost timely delivery of civil documentation

#### Contact:

**Ndzinwa Julius Bantar**

Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Program Development Manager

E-mail: [Julius.bantar@nrc.no](mailto:Julius.bantar@nrc.no) ; +(237) 657 29 21 85 | 677 85 88 34



Funded by  
European Union  
Humanitarian Aid



Sweden  
Sverige



Funded by  
the European Union



giz



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs





# ICLA PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS - 2022 TO DATE

- 12,859** People sensitized
- 8,282** Birth certificates established
- 4,793** People counselled on LCD
- 1,280** People trained on different LCD topics
- 402** National Identity Cards established



- 25** Community-based birth registration mechanisms supported.
- 69** Institutions involved with civil status registration provided materials and equipment.
- 22** Advocacy initiatives undertaken.



Cameroon Country Office

Rosa Parks Avenue  
BP: 35596, Yaoundé - Cameroon - Telephone: +237 690 027 942  
Kousséri: 699 316 533 - Maroua: 696 793 969 - Buea: 656 654 997 - Bamenda: 696 432 949  
Batouri: 694 953 472  
Website: [www.nrc.no](http://www.nrc.no)  
Facebook: NRC - Norwegian Refugee Council | Twitter: NRC\_Norway / NRC\_CWA