



Cameroon Social Safety Nets Project

Executive Summary of the Baseline Survey Report on the Support Measures for Host and Refugee Populations

Despite its sustained economic growth and previously benefiting from decades of stability, Cameroon has faced challenges on multiple fronts in recent years. Over the past decade, Cameroon has grappled with elevated poverty rates – 25.7 percent of the population (as of the latest household poverty survey in 2014) lived below the international poverty line, and extreme poverty is estimated at 24.3 percent in 2023 due to low economic growth and limited safety net programs.¹ Another challenge is insecurity, with attacks by Boko Haram in the Far North and the intensification of a secessionist insurgency in the English-speaking regions. Cameroon is also currently hosting more than 400,000 refugees, mainly from the Central African Republic and Nigeria.² In addition, Cameroon has the fifth highest prevalence of domestic violence – i.e., violence exerted by one spouse/partner on the other – in sub-Saharan Africa. Among Cameroonian women aged 15-49, nearly half (44%) report having experienced at least one form of IPV in their lifetime; and nearly a third (32%) report having experienced at least one form in the past year, with physical violence the most common form (20%).³

To address these challenges, the Government of Cameroon, with support from the World Bank established a social safety net system under the Social Safety Net Project (PFS) in 2013. The project aimed to provide monetary support to households experiencing chronic or extreme poverty and protect them against negative shocks. The project activities included regular cash transfers and accompanying measures, emergency cash transfers and labor-intensive public works. By the end of the project in 2022, it had reached over 350,000 households, including those who had been forcibly displaced.

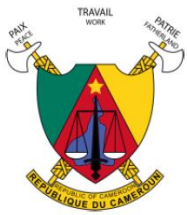
Given Cameroon's high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence in particular, the Government of Cameroon and the World Bank Africa Gender Innovation Lab (AFRIL) developed two innovative interventions within the framework of the accompanying measures of the PFS. These interventions were piloted in the country's poorest regions, including the Adamaoua, Far North, North, and East regions, some of which are also the most conflict-affected areas. The goal of these interventions was to prevent or reduce the prevalence of intimate partner violence. AFRIL partnered with the Government and the World Bank project team to conduct a rigorous randomized controlled trial evaluation of impact of the pilot interventions.

This report presents the findings of the baseline survey, which took place between August and September 2021 among 8,903 people (one male and one female per household, typically cohabiting partners/spouses) from 4,471 households in 209 villages spread over four regions: Adamaoua, East, Far North and North. Respondents from the Adamaoua region constitute 21% of the sample, while 38% are from the East, 7% are from the Far North, and 34% are from the North. The average household size of respondents is 9.35 individuals, and 40.6% of households are polygamous. Women in the sample are on

¹ [World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook. Cameroon Fact Sheet. April 2023.](#)

² [Hunger and fear stalk survivors of attack in North Cameroon. UNHCR. 2020](#)

³ Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). 2018. Republic of Cameroon.



average younger than men (37 years old v. 47 years old), achieve a lower level of formal education than men (with 2.2% having completed some or all of their secondary schooling compared to 12% of men), and earn less income from their primary economic activity (11,847 FCFA in the last 30 days compared to 19,082 FCFA for men). Our sample also reveals that women and men are similarly likely to have been born in Cameroon (77% v. 81.4%).

Several key findings emerged from the baseline survey related to attitudes towards violence, individual and community beliefs around household responsibilities and decision making, emotional well-being, and the visibility of personal finances. Overall, 53% of women and 60% of men believe that it is justified for a husband to beat his wife in at least one out of five situations asked about. There is substantial variation across regions, and across men and women within regions. Notably, just under 60% of women in the Adamaoua and the East regions agree with at least one out of five justifications for a husband to beat his wife, with a similar proportion of men agreeing; whereas in the Far North and the North, less than half of women agree and the gap between men and women's agreement is greater (66% of men v. 40% of women in the Far North agreeing and 69% of men v. 46% of women in the North agreeing). Furthermore, on average, only 17% of men surveyed think that it is justified in all situations for a woman to refuse to have sex with her husband, with the Far North an outlier at 31% of men recognizing a woman's right to refuse sex with her husband in any situation.

Respondents reported that their communities held less egalitarian beliefs than they did as individuals across a number of dimensions, such as women earning an income and joint planning and decision-making around household expenses. In terms of the distribution of household responsibilities, more than two-thirds of women report being the sole or principal person responsible for watching the children and monitoring girls' education, while more than half of men report being the sole or principal person responsible for monitoring boys' education. Women and men's emotional well-being—in terms of signs of depression and anxiety—varied widely across the regions but was worst overall for both sexes in the Far North.

A follow-up data collection will be conducted in summer 2023, after the completion of the pilot interventions. This endline data will be used to evaluate the pilot interventions' impacts on IPV, as well as on broader household dynamics and on men's and women's wellbeing. The results of the impact evaluation will inform decisions about whether to continue and scale up the interventions under new projects.