



NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

NRC Evaluation Final Report

Final Evaluation of the project "Integrated Emergency Aid for
Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest
Regions of Cameroon"

[OCTOBER / 2024] | FINAL EVALUATION

About Samuel Hall

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement. Our approach is ethical, academically rigorous, and based on first-hand experience of complex and fragile settings. Our research connects the voices of communities to changemakers for more inclusive societies. With offices in Afghanistan, Germany, Kenya and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates, we are based in the regions we study. For more information, please visit www.samuelhall.org.

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This evaluation was led by Carolina Viana, with the support of Carla Creis Cavero, Serge Hounton, Mohammad AlQaruoti and Stefanie Barratt.

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1. List of Acronyms

AJESH	Ajemalebu Self Help
AMEF	Authentique Memorial Empowerment Foundation
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BUNEC	National Bureau of Civil Status
CFM	Complaint Feedback Mechanism
CHINGO	Coordination of Humanitarian INGOs
HCC	Humanitarian Coordination Centre
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HLP	Housing, Land, Property
ICLA	Information, Counselling, Legal Assistance
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisations
IPC	Integrated food security Phase Classification
LFS	Livelihoods and Food Security
MPCA	Multipurpose Cash Assistance
MSC	Most Significant Change
NFI	Non-Food Items
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NWSW	Northwest Southwest
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SQL	Structured Query Language
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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3. Definitions

Humanitarian Action	Humanitarian action seeks to preserve life, uphold dignity, and restore individuals' ability to make choices, all through peaceful and non-discriminatory efforts. ¹
Integrated Programming	<p>Integrated programming is addressing the holistic needs of populations through intentional multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches. This requires being people-centred to conduct routine analysis and develop common objectives to inform collaboration across NRC and with other relevant actors as appropriate. At NRC, integrated programming further involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation's core competencies • Work by other agencies to go beyond stand-alone approaches • Contributing to protection and durable solutions²
Localisation	There is no single definition of localisation. In the humanitarian sector, the term refers to the strengthening of local responders to lead and deliver humanitarian aid, in a “spirit of partnership (that aims to) reinforces rather than replace local and national capacities”. ³ In NRC's regional strategy, NRC commits to “enhance the connection between communities and their institutions and strengthen the role of local organisations in serving displaced populations according to their respective roles” (NRC 2022-25 Regional Strategy). ⁴
Local actors	<p>NRC takes an expansive definition of local actors and systems which include key actors that are part of a system to bring the desired change and improved humanitarian outcomes. These include:⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and national authorities, • Local and national civil society actors including community-based organisations, refugee-led organisations, faith-based actors, research organisations and universities, and private sector actors.

¹ MSF, “L'action humanitaire”, n.d., <https://msf-crash.org/fr/acteurs-et-pratiques-humanitaires/laction-humanitaire>.

² International Association of Humanitarian Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection, ‘How would you define an effective humanitarian response?’, 2021 (accessed 20 September 2022), <https://phap.org/WHS-12jun2014-Q1>.

³ IASC, “The Grand Bargain in Practice: Mercy Corps' holistic localisation benefits affected people in Syria”, 2020, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-practice-mercy-corps-holistic-localisation-benefits-affected-people-syria>.

⁴ NRC, (2022). NRC Global Strategy 2022–2025. https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/policy-documents/global-strategy-2022-2025/nrc_global-strategy-2022-2025_english.pdf.

⁵ NRC, “Grand Bargain 2.0 Spotlight: Operationalising the commitments - NRC's approach”, 2023.

4. Executive Summary

4.1 Evaluation Context

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has been present in Cameroon since 2017 as part of their mission to respond to the Southwest and Northwest (SW and NW) crisis.⁶ NRC's project "Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon" focused on delivering multi-sectoral emergency assistance to communities in vulnerable situations, focusing on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the project's objectives align with the BHA's mission of providing food and non-food international disaster aid to better support those in need of humanitarian assistance.⁷

NRC has commissioned Samuel Hall to evaluate the success of their activities under the two phases of the projects entitled "Emergency Assistance and NFI Support for Vulnerable Communities Affected by Displacement in the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon" from 2020 to 2022 and "Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Region of Cameroon" from 2022 to 2024.

4.2 Description of the Project Evaluated

The project is divided into two phases: The first phase of the project focused on delivering Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructures and services, as well as providing Shelter and Settlements services.⁸

The second phase of the project (2022-2024), renamed "Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon" expanded its scope to include Livelihoods and Food Security (LFS), as well as Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA). In addition, during this phase, the project also focused on facilitating Shelter and Settlements, WASH, Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) Agriculture, Protection through ICLA, and Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA).⁹

4.3 Objective of the Evaluation

This evaluation examines the project's results, which began in August 2020 and progressed through two distinct phases until September 2024. The objective of the evaluation is to generate lessons learned and recommendations to propose improvements in the design, planning of NRC projects in NWSW regions of Cameroon. The evaluation analysed the results of the WASH, Shelter and Settlement, Food Assistance, Protection/ICLA, Agriculture, and HCIMA activities under the two phases of the project. The evaluation also assessed the effects on project participants in order to draw lessons learned and develop recommendations to address the needs of IDPs and conflict/crisis affected communities in NWSW regions of Cameroon, as well as inform future NRC programming.

⁶ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Fact Sheet: Cameroon, February 2024. Available at https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/factsheets/2024/factsheet_cameroon_feb2024.pdf.

⁷ NRC, "Norwegian Refugee Council Technical Narrative.", 2020.

⁹ Norwegian Refugee Council, *Technical Narrative: Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the North West and South West Cameroon*, Revised Submission, April 25, 2023.

4.4 Methodology

The evaluation follows the OECD DAC evaluation framework, specifically using four key criteria: Efficiency, Effectiveness, Coherence and Sustainability. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative methods. More specifically, the sampling included: an extensive document and literature review, 20 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs),¹⁰ both in person and online, a phone survey with 416 respondents, and 4 in-person Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

4.5 Main Results and Conclusion

The evaluation conducted by Samuel Hall concludes that the project “Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Region of Cameroon” has contributed to improved WASH, LFS, Shelter and Settlement, and HCIMA conditions in the NWSW regions of Cameroon. The following contributions can be highlighted:

- **Efficiency:** Strong financial management, strategic local partnerships, and a level of flexibility in resource allocation during project implementation has enabled NRC to better adapt to some changing and unpredictable circumstances. More frequent engagement with NRC’s local partners, especially in the early stages of implementation, would have strengthened NRC’s ability to navigate context-specific delays and barriers more collaboratively and hence, more efficiently.
- **Effectiveness:** Despite challenges persisting in Protection/ICLA and WASH activity implementation, the project contributed towards improving living conditions, dignity, and protection of communities in vulnerable situations. In addition, positive perceptions among project participants highlights NRC’s effectiveness in responding to certain pressing needs. NRC’s efforts to inclusive and gender-sensitive programming has positively impacted community members, including men, women, boys, girls, and persons with disabilities. The involvement of local and national actors transitioned to a more robust engagement, promoting local ownership and better collaborations. Also, the project included a complaints and feedback system integrated into NRC’s M&E system, seeking to respond to changing needs of concerned communities. Participant targeting strategies were effective, however, community engagement was more prominent during the initial stages of the project implementation, leading to some frustration amongst project participants during the implementation phase. Despite Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) being established through various communication channels, few participants were still unaware of or unable to access it. In terms of the integrated approach, the project also faced certain challenges in fully integrating interventions, as services like WASH and LFS were often fragmented across different communities, limiting the project’s holistic impact in both regions.
- **Coherence:** NRC is recognised as a key partner in NWSW due to its strong presence in the region, as well as its engagement at different coordination levels, including local, national, sectorial and high level. A key strength of NRC’s collaboration was the collaboration with its local partners and community focal points, as well as other humanitarian organisations present in the regions, which helped mitigate access and security related challenges, as well as avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Sustainability:** Although the project is primarily an emergency response type, the project has produced tangible outcomes with potential long-term benefits. By integrating both immediate and intermediate activities and collaborating with

¹⁰ In total, 20 KIIs were conducted. For interviews with activity officers (3 interviews), the SW and NW activity coordinators were present in the interview.

communities on some of these initiatives, the project has achieved specific sustainable outcomes that can continue beyond its duration.

4.6 Recommendations and lessons learned

1. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1.1: Strengthen Localisation Strategy

To enhance NRC's localisation policy, local communities and partners should be more integrally involved in all stages of project design, not just during the initial phases or at certain points in the project implementation. This approach ensures that project objectives are better aligned with local needs and priorities, fostering stronger community ownership and more tangible sustainable interventions, as well as stronger trust and NRC's acceptance with the concerned community. In addition, at a coordination level, NRC should advocate for greater recognition of the leadership, presence, and influence of local and national actors (L/NAs) within HCIMA mechanisms. The NEAR monitoring framework highlights the necessary changes to advance localisation commitments, emphasising the importance of increased representation of L/NAs in key decision-making discussions, including Cluster meetings and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

Recommendation 1.2: Improve Contingency Planning in Project Design

Develop contingency plans that better take into account different levels of insecurity, as well as other context specificities, implementing adaptive measures specific to each situation. Strengthen the engagement with local partners during the development of these plans, for instance through conducting collaborative risk assessments and developing more collaborative adaptive measures tailored to each identified risk.

Recommendation 1.3: Enhance the Integrated Approach in Conflict Settings

While the integrated approach has the potential to provide a comprehensive response to humanitarian needs, the limited resources and urgent demands in the Northwest and Southwest regions necessitate a critical reassessment of targeting strategies for its implementation. In conflict-affected settings, prioritising a smaller number of project participants can lead to increased tensions within communities, further destabilising already fragile security conditions. Accordingly, NRC should continue focusing on equitable service delivery underpinned by solid context analysis. Strengthening collaboration with the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) could also amplify NRC's integrated approach. By exploring synergies with RRM, particularly in shared sectors like shelter, WASH, and protection, NRC could achieve greater impact through joint interventions and resource-sharing initiatives.

2. PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2.1: Enhance Accountability and Transparency in Communication

To enhance the accuracy and sensitivity of information gathering at the inception phase, NRC should consider implementing individual interviews for people in extremely vulnerable conditions rather than relying solely on group discussions. This could create a more comfortable environment for participants, allowing them to share their experiences and needs openly without fear of stigma from other members of their communities. This would further strengthen the response, aligning it better to the real needs of communities.

This evaluation highlights the need for increased transparency around the profiling and verification of project participants. NRC should navigate these processes while upholding humanitarian principles. Clearer and stronger communication strategies regarding project

objectives, selection criteria for recipients, and implementation strategies should be developed since the inception of the project and throughout the project cycle, tailoring to the different phases of the project. This would enhance trust in volatile settings, as well as reduce frustration and any potential tensions caused amongst community members when implementing the response's services. Strengthen the Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) process by involving communities in collective reflections on project outcomes and lessons learned at the end will be crucial to enhance accountability, trust, and continuing strengthening acceptance of NRC within these communities.

Recommendation 2.2: Streamline Gender and Disability-Inclusive Programming

NRC should maintain and expand gender-sensitive programming by ensuring equal participation of women in decision-making processes and promoting their safety through gender-segregated facilities. Additionally, develop more targeted interventions for persons living with disabilities (LwD) by providing specific support and tailored information to ensure inclusivity in all programming. Targeting strategies should be redefined to enhance the inclusion of vulnerable communities. This may involve conducting targeted evaluations or needs assessments to identify the specific requirements of people LwD.

Recommendation 2.3: Strengthen Partnerships

To improve NRC's cluster coordination and overall effectiveness in humanitarian response, NRC should address existing gaps in staff participation in cluster meetings, hindered by competing responsibilities associated to their roles. Allocating dedicated personnel for coordination tasks could enhance NRC's presence in these spaces and ensure consistent participation.

3. OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3.1: Enhance Efficiency and Partner's Collaboration

NRC should continue balancing humanitarian assistance with capacity building efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency responses and a medium and longer term. Internally, additionally, NRC should provide continuous support to implementing partners, particularly in administrative, reporting, and procurement processes. In this regard, more comprehensive training on procurement procedures, focusing on quality operational training would be beneficial to local partners. Conduct regular working sessions to address potential challenges throughout the project cycle to address any administrative or operational challenge should be integrated into the project cycle, with a focus on promoting joint problem-solving strategies and responses.

In addition, NRC should allocate sufficient time from the project design stage for administrative, reporting, and financial procedures to avoid bureaucratic delays. This would reduce the pressure on field teams, by better reflecting the workload realities on-the-ground related to the implementation of these types of projects, as well as the subsequent NRC's reporting and processes. In this regard, strengthening communication with NRC's partners from the design phase is also essential, including clarifying reporting and operational standards.

Recommendation 3.2: Refine WASH and Protection/ICLA Services

- **WASH:** Review hygiene promotion activities to address gaps in knowledge among project participants. Expand hygiene education, particularly around critical handwashing practices, to improve disease prevention. Increase the number of water points and latrines, especially in underserved areas, to continue meeting community needs of communities. In addition, improving the infrastructure of WASH facilities, including latrines, along with enhanced advocacy through WASH Committees and

community engagement, can help raise awareness about the importance of preserving latrines and WASH infrastructure. This approach can help reduce misuse of NRC-installed infrastructure and improve overall comfort for individuals.

- **Protection/ICLA:** NRC should pursue greater advocacy efforts early in the project cycle to resolve bottlenecks. This includes working more closely with relevant government bodies at an earlier stage to explore more decentralised solutions and reduced delays in the production of Legal Civil Documentation (LCD) – such as birth certificates, as well as HLP disputes, through ensuring adequate due diligence and conflict analysis when supporting tenure security processes will be key.

5. Introduction

6.1 Summary Description of the Project

The Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) project titled "Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon" delivered multi-sectoral emergency assistance to communities in vulnerable situations, and which have been severely impacted by the ongoing conflict, within Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions (NWSW).

Funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the project's objectives align with the BHA's mission of providing both food and non-food international disaster aid to better serve those in need of humanitarian assistance.¹¹ This alignment also contributes to NRC's global strategy of addressing the increasing gap between humanitarian aid and the growing needs, enhancing NRC's capacity to reach a larger number of conflict-affected individuals.¹²

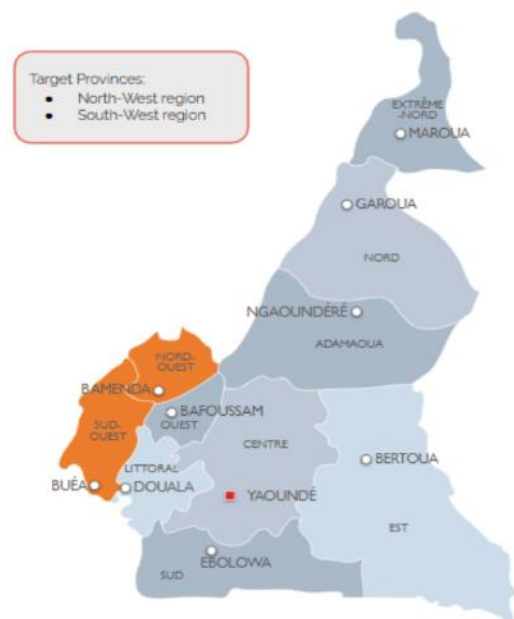
The project was designed with a holistic approach to provide humanitarian aid, addressing both the immediate and medium-term needs of conflict-affected communities in the Northwest (NW) and Southwest (SW) regions of Cameroon. Specifically, the project's goals were to:

- Improve living conditions, enhance food assistance, and ensure protection for vulnerable displaced populations in these regions.
- Strengthen the resilience of these communities by delivering rapid life-saving services, supporting early recovery, and providing enhanced protection.

Ultimately, the overall objective of the project is to ensure safe and equitable access to humanitarian services for those impacted by conflict and displacement in the target areas.

The action being evaluated proceeds a project launched in August 2020, and secured funding and progressed through two distinct phases:

- **First Phase (2020 - 2022):** Titled "Emergency Assistance and NFI Support for Vulnerable Communities Affected by Displacement in the Southwest and Northwest Regions of Cameroon," and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), this phase primarily focused on improving living conditions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. The main objectives were to provide basic shelter, household items, and enhance access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene



Map 1 Targeted Locations for the Evaluation in Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon

¹¹ NRC, "Norwegian Refugee Council Technical Narrative.", 2020.

¹² Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Global Strategy 2022-2025. Available at: https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/policy-documents/global-strategy-2022-2025/nrc_global-strategy-2022-2025_english.pdf

(WASH) facilities and practices to reduce the risk of disease.¹³

- **Second Phase (2022-2023 / 2023-2024):** Renamed "Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon," with funding from the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA), this phase expanded the project's focus. Additional sector activities such as livelihood and food security (LFS) and Information Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) were introduced. The project aimed to assist up to 40,000 unique participants across both regions.¹⁴

To achieve the project objectives, the intervention included key areas such as: ¹⁵

*Box 1 Project Description*¹⁶

1. Shelter and Settlements:



Shelter and Settlement activities were provided throughout both phases of the project and were divided into two activities. The **(a) shelter and settlement's NFIs** activities were focused on providing critical household essentials to vulnerable families. The project distributed kits that included items such as mats, blankets, and kitchen sets, aiming to improve living conditions for families in crisis. It also provided Long-Lasting Insecticide-Treated Nets (LLINs) to help prevent diseases, promoting their proper use among project participants. In the **(b) shelter** activity, the project focused on providing safe and secure shelter to households. The shelters were designed to meet internationally recognised standards. The project also strongly emphasised supporting the local economy by producing goods and services from within the country.

2. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):



The WASH sector is divided into set of activities. **(a) Water supply** focused on improving access to safe drinking water by developing, repairing, and maintaining water points in the communities through contracting local service providers and engaging community-based management structures. To do this, NRC worked closely with local water user committees, training them to ensure the sustainable management and operation of water infrastructure. The project focused on ensuring that households had access to clean, uncontaminated water by providing treated and protected water sources. **(b) Sanitation** sought to provide safe, clean, and accessible sanitation facilities, such as latrines, to reduce the prevalence of open defecation. It also focused on the maintenance and cleanliness of these facilities, ensuring that they were used properly by the community. **(c) Hygiene promotion** aimed to expand good hygiene practices, with a focus on handwashing and proper menstrual hygiene management. It worked to increase community knowledge and behaviour around hygiene practices through educational campaigns and the distribution of hygiene kits. Through **(d) WASH Non-Food Items (NFIs)**, the project provided essential hygiene materials, such as soap and sanitation kits, to help families maintain personal hygiene.

3. Food Assistance:



The **Food Assistance** sector was divided into two activities. The **Food assistance** set of activities aimed to improve households' nutritional well-being and resilience in vulnerable conditions by ensuring they had adequate

¹³ NRC, "BHA Final Performance Report - Fiscal Year 2023 - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

¹⁴ NRC, "BHA Final Performance Report Template - Updated September 2022_VF", 2022.

¹⁵ (For a more detailed overview of the project and its service-specific indicators, please refer to Annex 2.)

¹⁶ NRC, "USAID/Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs Technical Narrative - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

access to food. This was done through e-voucher systems, helping recipients meet their food needs while reducing dependence on negative coping strategies. The project also monitored how households adapted to food shortages to gauge the effectiveness of this assistance.

4. Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)



The **Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)** provided flexible financial support to vulnerable households, through food and non-food assistance. Cash assistance aimed to enable households to make their own decisions on how to allocate funds for essential needs, including food, shelter, healthcare, and NFIs. This approach also aimed to help households maintain an acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS) by allowing them to purchase nutritious food.

5. Agriculture Support:



The Agricultural support was implemented during the second phase of the project and had two objectives: **(a) Agricultural production activities** aimed to increase the productivity and sustainability of smallholder farmers by providing them with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to enhance their agricultural practices. The project worked to improve the management of farmland hectares by introducing better agricultural practices and technologies. The project also focused on post-harvest processes, helping households implement improved storage practices to reduce crop losses. Seeds and agricultural inputs were distributed to support project participants in their production efforts. **(b) Pest and pesticide management activities**, aimed to train individuals on appropriate crop protection practices, focusing on pest management and the safe use and creation of pesticides.

6. Protection - Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance (ICLA)



The **Protection/ICLA** activities, aimed to empower individuals in vulnerable situations by providing them with the knowledge and legal support necessary to secure their housing, land, and property (HLP) rights, as well as legal identity and civil documentation (LCD). The project focused on increasing awareness of these rights and responsibilities through training sessions. The Protection/ICLA activities also provided direct information, counselling and legal assistance to individuals facing issues such as eviction threats or lacking proper legal documentation.

7. HCIMA, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA):



HCIMA activities aimed to strengthen collaboration and information-sharing among humanitarian organisations operating at a national, regional and sub-regional level, ensuring alignment with their efforts to address community needs.

While aiming to promote safe access to integrated emergency aid, the project was designed to tailor services to the urgent needs of the vulnerable population. Revisions were made at each new funding cycle to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness. The nature of services provided varied according to the project's phase. Below is a calendar of activities delivered per year:

Table 1 Project Evolution: 2020-2024

Sector	2020 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	✓	✓	✓
 Shelter and Settlement	✓	✓	✓
 Food Assistance	-	✓	✓
 Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)		✓	✓
 Agriculture Support	-	✓	✓
 Protection through Information Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA)	-	✓	✓
 HCIMA	-	✓	✓

6.2 Objectives of the Final Evaluation

This evaluation examines the project's results, which began in August 2020 and progressed through two distinct phases until 2024, as outlined above. The objective is to provide evidence on the effectiveness of the strategies and processes used in the design and implementation of the programme. This includes documenting innovative aspects, capturing lessons learned, and identifying key challenges. The evaluation offers valuable insights and recommendations to enhance future project planning, implementation, and programmatic impact.

6. Methodology

7.1 Evaluation framework

This evaluation is based on data collection conducted by Samuel Hall from September to October 2024. Mixed-methods research was conducted, incorporating desk review as well. To ensure a comprehensive assessment of the project's results, this evaluation has used four specific OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, outlined in Figure 1 below. Annex 5 contains a detailed Evaluation Matrix with the evaluation questions used to conduct this evaluation. The collaboration between the Samuel Hall team and NRC played a key role in addressing challenges associated with data collection in Northwest and Southwest regions and ensuring enough data was collected during fieldwork.

Figure 1 Evaluation Framework



7.2 Sampling

Data collection modalities involved both in-person and remote interviews and discussions:

- A total of **20 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** were conducted; **18 (eighteen)** were conducted remotely and **2 (two) were conducted in person**.¹⁷ These interviews involved key actors from the implementing partners, government, donor agencies, cluster partners, and community leadership, providing diverse perspectives about the project.
- **4 (four) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were conducted in person, in Ikiliwindi, Konye, Sabongari, and Befang. NRC selected these field locations based on the fact that these communities benefited from more than one project activity. The FGDs prioritised the inclusion of IDPs and they provided an in-depth snapshot of some project participants' experiences and the project's impacts.
- A **phone survey** was conducted with **416 (four hundred and sixteen) respondents** across the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon, prioritising IDPs and women heads of households.

¹⁷ In total, 20 KIIs were conducted. For interviews with activity officers (3 interviews), the SW and NW activity coordinators were present in the interview.

NRC provided a list of participants, updated on a rolling basis, based on stakeholders' availability and the sampling revision, as well as focal points and community leaders in case studies communities.

Table 2 Summary Evaluation Sampling

	Female		Male		Total
Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)					
NRC	4		4		8
Implementing Partner - SIRDEP	1		-		1
Implementing Partner - AMEF	-		1		1
Government Stakeholder - BUNEC	-		1		1
Donor - USAID	2		-		2
Cluster Partner - OCHA	1		3		4
Community Leaders	-		4		4
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)					
Konye (SW)	-		7		7
Sabongari (NW)	7		-		7
Befang (NW)	-		6		6
Ikiliwindi (SW)	7		-		7
Total Respondents Reached	22		26		54
Phone Survey					
	NW	SW	NW	SW	
Under 18	1	1	-	-	2
18-24 years old	18	7	2	1	28
25-34 years old	49	33	9	12	103
35-44 years old	34	43	22	23	122
44-54 years old	13	39	20	20	92
55-64 years old	6	8	12	14	40
65 or older	7	7	9	6	29
Total Respondents Reached	128	138	74	76	416

7.3 Gaps and Limitations

- The scheduling of online interviews was impacted by the unavailability of certain key stakeholders due to conflicting priorities, time zone differences, and technical constraints. This challenge resulted in delays to the data collection process, as perspectives from certain targeted respondents could not be gathered within the planned time frame. To mitigate this situation, NRC's support to coordinate and reschedule certain KIIs was key and ensured the Samuel Hall evaluation team still gathered relevant information.
- The training of enumerators began immediately after a week-long lockdown, which restricted access to the training venue and delayed the deployment of the team for in-person data collection. To mitigate this, phone surveys were conducted during the lockdown. Although enumerators and the Field Coordinator (FC) faced risks while travelling to the phone call centre, strict security protocols were followed to minimise any security threats.
- Poor network coverage during the phone surveys and while planning community visits for FGDs and KIIs also created challenges in securing interviews. Enumerators had to repeatedly contact participants, causing delays in some interviews with community members. Nevertheless, the team was able to gather all planned information.
- Finally, as indicated in the inception report, the phone survey did not include a control group or a direct baseline/endline cohort, which limits our ability to draw causal inferences about the impact of NRC's programming. Comparisons between project participant who received different types of support provided some insights, but these are not equivalent to findings from a randomised controlled trial. Moreover, the survey used for this evaluation differed from NRC's baseline and previous year's assessments due to the use of different data collection methodologies employed by NRC (phone surveys versus in-person interviews) and distinct respondent cohorts. As a result, direct comparisons were high-level, focusing on identifying general trends rather than precise changes. Although the same key outcome indicator framework was used to track progress, any trends observed were interpreted with caution. For Year 1 and Year 2 data, overarching trends were acknowledged, but it was clarified at the inception stage that these were not direct comparisons due to the methodological and contextual differences.

7. Findings

This section presents the key findings and is structured into four sub-sections: Efficiency, Effectiveness, Coherence, and Sustainability.

To provide readers with a clearer and more intuitive overview of the project's performance, this report includes a traffic light scoring matrix at the beginning of each subsection to rate the achievement of every evaluation question (EQ). This matrix uses a colour-coded system:

- **Red** indicates that the project performed insufficiently, highlighting critical areas that require immediate attention.
- **Orange** means adequate performance, suggesting that while some goals were met, notable shortcomings could be improved.
- **Green** reflects good performance, indicating that the project met or exceeded expectations in relevant areas.
- **Gray** is used for inconclusive data, representing situations where insufficient information is available to make an accurate assessment.

8.1 Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

Criteria	Dimension Measured	Score
Efficiency	EQ 1.1 How efficiently were resources (time, human, financial, material) utilised in relation to the results achieved in the programme?	Good - Budget flexibility, adaptability to a volatile context, and a cost-efficiency intervention.
	EQ 1.2 What opportunities exist for optimising resource utilisation in future programmes?	Good - Collaborating with community focal points improved access during periods of instability.
	EQ 1.3 How efficient was NRC in the delivery of the project in relation to the implementation period and against the budget? Are there aspects where NRC could have performed more efficiently?	Adequate - Delays caused by security challenges, reporting, and administrative procedures.

Amidst the pressing humanitarian challenges in the NWSW regions, the NRC integrated response project **showcases several examples of efficient use of resources, including effective financial management, strategic use of local partnerships, and a flexible approach to resource allocation (EQ 1.1)**. NRC's Financial Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outline how financial activities should be conducted each month and help ensure consistency and accountability in financial management. They also elaborate on work plans and were highlighted as key enablers for budget and timeline tracking.¹⁸ In this context, respondents emphasised that the resources available were both sufficient and adaptable, allowing them to respond to changing circumstances effectively.¹⁹

A donor respondent emphasised NRC's effective resource utilisation, which encourages continued funding support from USAID based on NRC's cost-effectiveness.²⁰ This sentiment was echoed by implementing partners, who noted NRC's flexibility in resource allocation to

¹⁸ KII7, NRC.

¹⁹ KII1, Implementing Partner.

²⁰ KII5, Donor.

meet on-the-ground realities.²¹ For example, adaptive budgeting allowed NRC to manage transportation costs, which nearly tripled due to poor road conditions during the rainy season.²²

NRC teams also felt that resources were generally well allocated, and costs aligned with project outcomes despite delays from various external and internal factors outlined in this section. Hygiene promotion activities were highlighted as particularly well managed, with activities delivered on time and with adequate resources.²³

In the challenging security context, NRC's strict adherence to protocols - such as observing "ghost town"²⁴ days and securing clearances before implementing activities in the NW and SW regions - helped mitigate potential risks and minimise delays.²⁵ During periods of uninterrupted security, NRC was able to maximise field activities. As a result, during the first part of the project, NRC achieved its hygiene promotion goals and distributed all 2,000 planned NFIs before the end of December 2020, along with an additional 250 NFIs and 250 COVID-19 kits beyond the original plan.²⁶

Moreover, the project leveraged community focal points to assist with activities such as profiling and information sessions.²⁷ **This approach highlights an opportunity to optimise resource utilisation in future NRC projects (EQ 1.2).** In particular, the engagement of community-based focal persons in unstable regions, such as Bamenda, allowed for operations to continue.²⁸ When NRC staff faced mobility challenges, these community focal points ensured the continuity of activities.²⁹ Additionally, for cash and food assistance initiatives, community focal persons played a key role in remote areas, facilitating the continuation of distributions.³⁰

Nonetheless, **areas for improvement have been identified in administrative efficiency, along with challenges related to the volatile security context and construction delays (EQ 1.3).** For example, in terms of inefficiencies in administration processes, during the initial phase of the "Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon" project, minor administrative errors by NRC in the grant applications and budget submissions during the inception phase caused significant delays. One respondent noted that early mistakes, such as rounding errors in the budget, could have been easily prevented through more careful revisions prior to submission to the donor.³¹ Yet, these minor errors resulted in weeks of delays.³²

Moreover, NRC local partners highlighted challenges related to NRC's administrative, reporting, and financial processes.³³ For instance, not enough time was allocated for the necessary bureaucratic steps at the start of the project, especially given local partners' lack of familiarity with NRC's procedural and reporting criteria, leading to difficulties in meeting reporting deadlines and added pressure on field teams.³⁴ These inefficiencies caused delays

²¹ KII1, Implementing Partner; KII2 Implementing Partner.

²² KII1, Implementing Partner.

²³ KII2 Implementing Partner.

²⁴ "Ghost town days" refer to days when a lockdown is imposed, during which residents are prohibited from leaving their homes.

²⁵ NRC, "OFDA Program Performance Report: Emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South-West and Northwest Regions of Cameroon", 2021.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ NRC, "Bha Semi-Annual Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

²⁸ KII1, Implementing Partner.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ KII6, NRC.

³¹ KII5 Donor.

³² Ibid.

³³ KII1 Implementing Partner; KII2 Implementing Partner.

³⁴ KII1 Implementing Partner.

and shortened the overall implementation timeline, making it harder for teams to deliver activities on time.³⁵

On the other hand, NRC staff noted that partners sometimes struggled with NRC's reporting criteria. Differences in the 'ways of operating' between NRC and local partners in procurement processes made it challenging for partners to adhere to the strict operational set by NRC and the donor.³⁶ This lack of familiarity delayed report submissions and impacted local partners' ability to meet project demands and deadlines.³⁷ While NRC's support was generally considered sufficient, one partner suggested that better communication from the start of the project could have improved these inefficiencies in both implementation and reporting.³⁸ Regular working sessions focusing on these aspects would have allowed partners to ask questions and clarify expectations, while establishing routine meetings to discuss project reporting and other procedural aspects could have facilitated discussions about administrative challenges faced and found collaborative solutions.³⁹

Similarly, implementing partners also noted that more collaborative budget allocation at the design stage could have led to greater efficiency during the implementation phase.⁴⁰ For example, input from local partners on budget allocations would have provided insights into local realities that may have been overlooked during the project design phase, as emphasised by the KII quote below. This approach could have strengthened collaboration between NRC and its partners, allowing for better adaptation to both internal and external challenges while reinforcing NRC's commitment to localise its work with local partners effectively.

“In the future, once we have the terms of reference, we should be allowed to propose a budget based on those terms and the activities we need to undertake. Currently, we often receive a predetermined lump sum and we are expected to work within that constraint. This can be quite challenging for us. If we had the flexibility to propose our own budget, taking into account the real challenges we face, it would be more beneficial.” (KII 1)

The volatile security situation in the NW SW regions remained a constant challenge impacting resource management throughout the implementation of the project. “Ghost town” days, lockdowns, and unpredictable violent outbursts made fieldwork difficult to plan and implement. The box 1 below outlines these challenges by project phase.

Despite these obstacles, NRC implemented several mitigating measures, such as distributing resources before lockdowns, leveraging local contacts to facilitate access and continuation of some project activities, as well as creating a business continuity plan, which helped minimise inefficiencies caused by external factors.^{41,42} While many of these challenges were unpredictable, certain conflict-specific events, such as lockdowns and road deterioration during the rainy season, could have been anticipated and integrated into the project timeline and budget during the design phase.⁴³

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ KII6, NRC.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ KII2 Implementing Partner.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ KII1, Implementing Partner.

⁴¹ KII 4, Cluster Partner; KII 10, NRC; KII 13, NRC.

⁴² NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

⁴³ KII1, Implementing Partner.

Box 1 External Factors Impacting the Project's Efficiency

- **During the first phase of the project (2020 - 2022)**, under the title “Emergency Assistance and NFI Support for Vulnerable Communities Affected by Displacement in the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon” (2020 - 2022), the project faced several delays caused by external factors such as the requirement for prior approvals from the Humanitarian Coordination Centres (HCC)⁴⁴ before implementation, COVID-19, frequent lockdowns, and local security issues.⁴⁵ The combination of these factors led to the loss of 33 working days between August 2020 and January 2021, which affected the timely execution of certain activities, such as water point assessments and construction in the NW and SW regions of Cameroon.⁴⁶
- Similarly, **during the final implementation phase of the project (2022 - 2024)**, under the title “Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Region of Cameroon”, several security incidents and access limitations were reported, resulting in 31 lockdown days and 20 movement restrictions between September 2023 and March 2024.⁴⁷ These access challenges were exacerbated by deteriorating road conditions, particularly due to heavy rains at the end of the project, which further complicated mobility.⁴⁸ The security landscape in the NW region also grew increasingly complex, as non-state armed groups (NSAGs) required humanitarian organisations to obtain their authorisation before conducting field operations.⁴⁹ NSAGs imposed a new tax on trucks, which affected NRC’s capacity to deliver essential supplies; for example, in February 2024, a truck carrying NRC NFIs was turned away for failing to pay the required tax.⁵⁰ Difficult access to target areas in the NW has further driven up costs, leading NRC to anticipate potential delays in achieving project objectives.⁵¹ In fact, the project has experienced a cost increase compared to the initial proposal, despite the scope of work remaining unchanged, which has affected construction and rehabilitation efforts, including water system repairs and shared household latrines.⁵²

⁴⁴ To improve coordination of humanitarian assistance, the Government of Cameroon established Humanitarian Coordination Centres (HCC) in the capitals of the Northwest and South-West regions: Bamenda and Buea, respectively. UNICEF, “UNICEF Cameroon Humanitarian Situation Report”, June 2019.

⁴⁵ Despite ongoing discussions and established notification systems, authorities still require humanitarian actors to secure written authorisations before implementing humanitarian activities, particularly for distributions. The procedures for sharing information between these centres and humanitarian actors are frequently renegotiated and sometimes expanded. For instance, in June 2022 in the South-West region, it was mandated that authorisations also needed to be obtained from Senior Divisional Officers, which resulted in extensive administrative processes and delays for humanitarian operations. OCHA, “Cameroon: Humanitarian Needs Overview”, 2023.

⁴⁶ NRC, “OFDA Program Performance Report: Emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South-West and Northwest regions of Cameroon”, April 30, 2021.

⁴⁷ NRC, “BHA Semi-Annual Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon”, 2024.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

8.2 Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

Criteria	Dimension Measured	Score
Effectiveness	EQ 2.1 To what extent did NRC achieve the objectives of the project in improving the living condition, dignity, food security and protection capacities of project participants?	Adequate - The project achieved several objectives through its activities, with key interventions in MPCA, WASH, and food assistance showing notable effectiveness. Nevertheless, challenges persist, particularly in WASH and ICLA assistance.
	EQ 2.2 To what extent has the project created conditions enabling changes for men and women, boys and girls and community actors?	Inconclusive - The project promoted age and gender-sensitive programming. Yet support for individuals with disabilities remains inconclusive.
	EQ 2.3 To what extent have the strategies and processes implemented (project participants targeting, counter verification, and mainstreaming protection) in the project design contributed to positive outcomes for vulnerable populations in terms of safety, dignity, and access to essential services?	Adequate - The strategies for identifying vulnerable communities, as well as with the counter-verification processes and selection plans, were effective in ensuring clarity and reinforcing accountability. However, community engagement was more prominent during the initial stages of project implementation, leading to frustration and reducing the potential for achieving more inclusive strategies throughout the project cycle.
	EQ 2.4 Are there underlying factors beyond the project's control that influenced its performance?	Good - The project faced multiple external challenges, however, effective collaboration with cluster partners and community focal points helped minimise their impact.
	EQ 2.5 What is the level of participation of communities in the different phases of the project cycle (programming, identification, formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation)?	Adequate - Communities participated in the programming phase by being consulted through needs assessment, though their role could have been more central in the programming and design phases of the project. Increasing community involvement would enhance the project's participatory approach.
	EQ 2.6 How were complaints and feedback integrated into the day-to-day implementation of activities, and what impact did community engagement have on project success?	Inconclusive - Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) were established through various communication channels. However, few participants were still unaware of or unable to access the CFM, and the integration of children within the CFM remains inconclusive.
	EQ 2.7 To what extent was the integrated approach effective in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and ensuring a holistic response? Did the approach have an impact on the project's results?	Adequate - The project's multi-sectoral aspect benefited project participants. However, the project faced certain challenges in fully integrating interventions, as services like WASH and LFS were often fragmented across different communities, limiting the project's holistic impact.

8.2.1 Impact of Project Objectives on Living Conditions in Targeted Communities

Several project results contributed to improving **the living conditions, dignity, food security and protection capacities of project participants (E.Q 2.1)**. A majority of survey respondents reported the **WASH** interventions as useful, with 86% rating them as ‘very useful’ and only 2.5% being ‘neutral’.⁵³ The table below outlines the perceived usefulness of WASH programming. Among the participants interviewed for this study, behaviour change activities were rated the most useful intervention. Hygiene kits were the most widely distributed form of support amongst the persons surveyed, reaching approximately 30% of households across both regions. They were also highly appreciated, scoring 4.8 out of 5.^{54,55} This sentiment was also echoed by implementing partners who noted that hygiene promotion activities, including hand washing competitions, increased awareness and adoption of better hygiene practices within conference communities.^{56,57}

Type of WASH Support	Average Usefulness
Improved access to potable water	4.38
Safe sanitation facilities	4.68
Sanitation kits	4.75
Hygiene kits	4.80
Behaviour changes activities	4.85

However, the survey also revealed differences in handwashing practices between project participants and non-recipients. While there is strong awareness of handwashing after using the toilet (93%) and before eating (93%), awareness drops significantly in other areas.⁵⁸ For instance, respondents who benefited from WASH services reported lower adherence to these practices compared to those who did not receive these services. Notably, only 9% of project participants understood the importance of washing their hands after changing a child’s diaper.⁵⁹ These are critical moments for hand hygiene, essential in preventing disease transmission. Moreover, some communities have also expressed that additional water points and latrines are needed to meet their needs.^{60,61} While nearly 80% of households surveyed have access to water within 1 kilometre, a significant 20% face continued challenges in proximity to water sources, pointing to an ongoing need for improvement.⁶²

⁵³ Phone Survey.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ KII 1, Implementing Partner; FGD 4.

⁵⁷ NRC, “USAID/Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs Technical Narrative - NRC Cameroon 2023”, 2023.

⁵⁸ Phone Survey.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

⁶¹ KII 10 NRC; FGD 1.

⁶² Samuel Hall, “Final Evaluation Survey”, 2024.

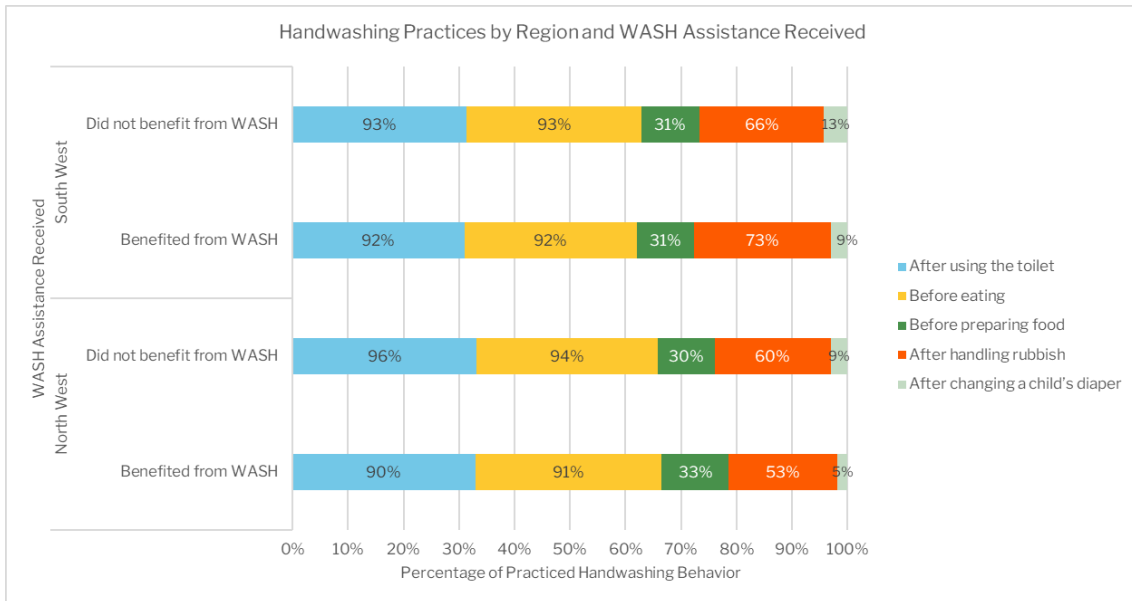
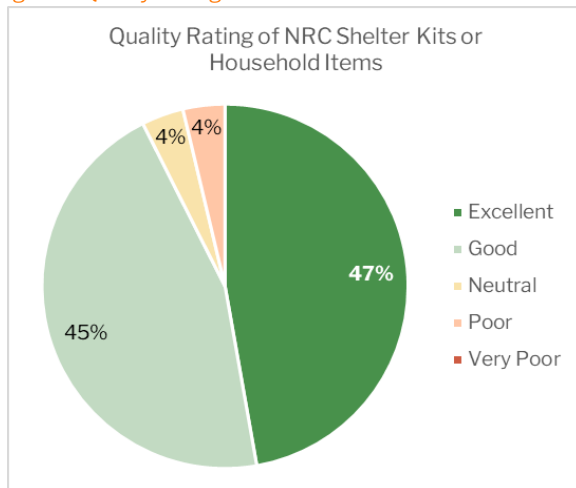


Figure 2 Handwashing Practices by region and WASH Assistance Received

The **Shelter and Settlement** activities improved the living conditions, dignity and protection for 6250 households reaching 38,524 individuals (19,797 females, 18,727 males) from 2020 to 2022⁶³ and supported 7,200 individuals from 2022 to 2023 and 6,000 individuals from 2023 to 2024 through the provision of shelter and household items and assistance.⁶⁴ As outlined in Figure 2 below, the majority of respondents (93%) rated the quality of NRC shelter kits and household items positively.⁶⁵ Participants who expressed satisfaction with the quality of materials explained that it allowed them to repair or expand their shelters.⁶⁶ Solar lanterns included in the NFI kits were especially appreciated in areas lacking electricity.⁶⁷ Among those who received shelter support, 70% reported a significant improvement in their living conditions.⁶⁸ Conversely, seven out of ten interviewed recipients of shelter support indicated that they have additional shelter needs.⁶⁹ The most commonly cited requirement is for mattresses, with other items such as mosquito nets, bed sheets, and cooking utensils also identified as necessities.⁷⁰ While mosquito nets and cooking utensils were among the items distributed under this activity, some surveyed may not have received these, hence highlighting their needs in this regard.

Figure 3 Quality Ratings of NRC Shelter Kits or Household



According to most respondents, one of the most effective activities was MPCA - perceived as fast, efficient, cost-effective, and flexible - enabling project participants to address their

⁶³ NRC, "BHA Program Performance Report - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

⁶⁴ NRC, "BHA Final Performance Report - Fiscal Year 2023 - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

⁶⁵ Phone Survey.

⁶⁶ KII 2, Implementing Partner; KII 9 NRC; FGD 3.

⁶⁷ KII 9, Implementing Partner; KII 6.1, NRC; FGD 3.

⁶⁸ Phone Survey.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

prioritised needs.⁷¹ Overall, these findings suggest that NRC's MPCA support efforts are largely successful, with the vast majority of project participants experiencing noticeable improvements in their living conditions and expressing high satisfaction with the quality of the kits and items provided.

"I used to sleep on the floor and with the help they (NRC, through MPCA) offered, I was able to buy a small mattress, which I now put on the floor and sleep on. So, things have changed from how they were before." (FGD4)

Looking at the **Food Assistance**, the analysis of the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS)⁷² scores reveal a critical level of food insecurity among households surveyed in NW and SW, with the vast majority experiencing significant levels of food-related hardship. In total, over 92% of households are grappling with either moderate or severe food insecurity.⁷³ Over 92% of these households experience moderate to severe food insecurity, with nearly half (48%) classified as severely food insecure.⁷⁴ This means that these families frequently face significant disruptions in their food consumption, and many within this group are likely going without sufficient food for long periods or resorting to extreme measures to cope with food shortages.

Within this context, the majority of households perceive the **MPCA** provided by NRC as highly beneficial. MPCA was reported as being particularly effective in enabling project participants to invest in small businesses or improve their agricultural outputs, contributing to their self-reliance.⁷⁵ In addition, most respondents indicated that they were able to meet their food related immediate needs after receiving cash support, highlighting the positive impact of these interventions on household food security.⁷⁶ In fact, IDP respondents, as well as traditional leader respondents, expressed that the food and cash assistance helped them support their families during difficult times, when getting food was difficult due to lack of resources to do so.⁷⁷ In this regard, respondents reported that improved food consumption rates have led to reduced negative coping strategies.⁷⁸ Yet, regionally, the NW shows slightly better outcomes in terms of households being able to fully meet their basic needs, suggesting that the intervention may be better aligned with the specific needs or conditions in this area.⁷⁹ As shown in figure 3, out of the 232 respondents who mentioned receiving cash transfer assistance, 98 were from the NW. Of those in the NW, 78.5% were fully able to meet their basic needs after receiving cash assistance. In the SW, 72% of respondents (97 out of 134) were fully able to meet their basic needs following the cash support.⁸⁰

⁷¹ KII 6, NRC; FGD 3; FGD 2; FGD 4; KII 6.1 NRC; KII 11, Community Leader; KII 4, Cluster Partner; KII 10, NRC.

⁷² The HFIAS is a standardised tool used to assess the degree of food insecurity within households by measuring the frequency and severity of food access issues. It evaluates a household's experience with food insecurity over a specific time period, categorising households into levels such as food secure, mildly food insecure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure based on their responses.

⁷³ Phone Survey.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ FGD 1; KII 12, Community Lead; KII 2, Implementing Partner; KII 6 NRC.

⁷⁶ Phone Survey.

⁷⁷ KII 12, Community Leader; FGD 3; FGD 2; FGD 1.

⁷⁸ KII 10 NRC.

⁷⁹ Phone Survey.

⁸⁰ Phone Survey.

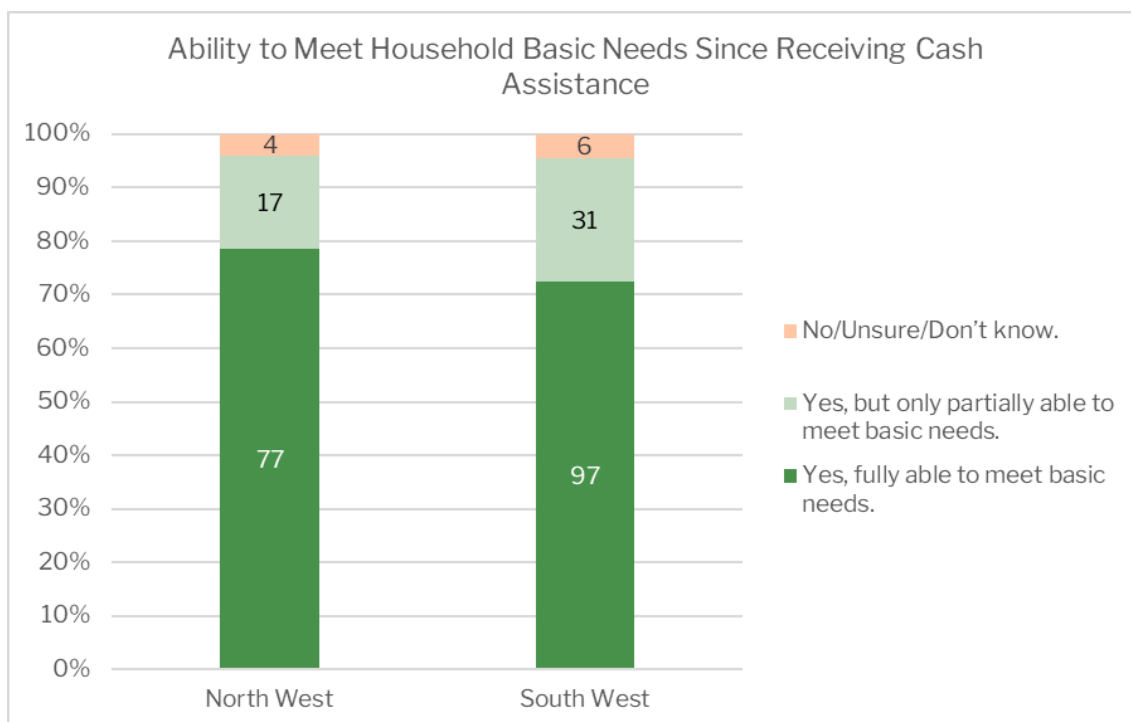


Figure 4 Ability to Meet Household Basic Needs since Receiving Cash Assistance

Moreover, under the **Agricultural Support** component, the project managed to improve the agricultural production of 1,200 individuals from 2022 to 2023,⁸¹ and 1,200 individuals between 2023 and 2024.⁸² According to respondents, agricultural support allowed households to harvest and sell produce, enhancing both their food security and income generation. This, in turn, led to an overall improvement in household well-being.⁸³

Protection/ICLA's interventions aimed to enhance the legal protection of displacement-affected individuals by facilitating access to birth certificates, national identity cards (NICs), and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) dispute resolutions.⁸⁴ Respondents reported benefiting from various types of legal assistance from NRC, the most common form being support in obtaining birth certificates.⁸⁵ This was followed by assistance in obtaining national identity cards, while fewer individuals benefited from HLP rights-related services.⁸⁶ In terms of perceived impact, the vast majority (89%) of respondents found NRC's legal assistance "Somewhat helpful" or "Very helpful."⁸⁷ Amongst these, younger respondents tend to find the support more useful.⁸⁸ This is in line with the NRC's legal and civil documentation programme focus on supporting young individuals in accessing basic services, resuming education or finding employment. In contrast, HLP services were designed to address adults' legal needs related to these topics.

The assistance provided by NRC in obtaining birth certificates is the most positively perceived.⁸⁹ Notably, the establishment of birth certificates and national identity cards allowed children to enrol in school⁹⁰ and improved access to civil rights.⁹¹ However, one

⁸¹ NRC, "BHA Final Performance Report - Fiscal Year 2023 - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

⁸² NRC, "BHA Program Performance Report - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

⁸³ KII 6 NRC; FGD 1; FGD 4.

⁸⁴ NRC, "BHA Final Performance Report - Fiscal Year 2023 - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

⁸⁵ Phone Survey.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ KII 3, Implementing Partner; KII 7 NRC.

⁹¹ KII 3, Implementing Partner; KII 10 NRC.

emerging issue was the delay in the delivery of National Identity Cards (NICs).⁹² Participants reported that when the validation dates in their Temporary Identification Documents expired, they faced exploitation, as security personnel capitalised on the delay in processing their NICs.⁹³ Recognising the posed challenges, NRC aims to strengthen its advocacy efforts to address the decentralisation of the NIC printing.⁹⁴ This continuous advocacy is still relevant, as there remains a substantial demand for further support in obtaining birth certificates (76%) and ID cards (63%) amongst respondents.⁹⁵

“In CD we were not able to meet the targets on time, this is due to the partners we work with, councils causing delay” (KII7)

Moreover, while there were some challenges in meeting targets related to HLP rights, legal counselling was perceived as beneficial, and NRC reported that project participants felt better equipped to resolve disputes and exercise their rights.⁹⁶ In fact, three-quarters of the respondents having benefited from Protection/ICLA’s support felt more informed about their housing, land, property (HLP), or legal identity rights after receiving NRC support.⁹⁷

8.2.2 Project Results: Creating Inclusive Programming for Men, Women, Boys, Girls, and Community Actors

The project has had attention to gender and age aspects, **to ensure inclusive programming that addresses the needs of women, adolescents, children, and individuals living with disabilities (LwD) (EQ 2.2)**. Overall, when the project has used gender-sensitive programming, including populations in vulnerable situations, and community engagement, this has contributed to improving the well-being of project participants, promoting positive behavioural changes and strengthening resilience within communities. Throughout the project, NRC’s activities aimed to prioritise women who find themselves in vulnerable situations, such as those heading households.⁹⁸ In this regard, the **gender** distribution in both regions showed a higher proportion of female respondents (64% in both regions).⁹⁹

In Protection/ICLA activities, as part of NRC’s adaptive and tailored strategy, the targeting criteria varied depending on the component.¹⁰⁰ A respondent from the implementing team noted that during sensitisation sessions, the majority of participants were women and children, as these groups often take on responsibilities related to childcare needs, while men are typically engaged in farming or other types of work outside the domestic sphere.¹⁰¹ The respondent also noted that counselling and legal assistance sessions primarily involved adults, as children typically do not engage in tenancy agreements.¹⁰² In contrast, birth certificate initiatives mainly targeted school-aged children, while training on dispute resolution and HLP rights was mainly provided to local and traditional authorities, who were predominantly men due to their established societal roles in decision-making.¹⁰³ Through Protection/ICLA, NRC’s project sought to advance women’s rights in the legal space.¹⁰⁴ For instance, advocacy on women’s inheritance rights and access to HLP created awareness that contributed to the way local authorities view and perceive women’s legal entitlements.¹⁰⁵ The respondent also noted that community dialogue on these issues not only seemed to

⁹² NRC, “BHA Final Performance Report - Fiscal Year 2023 - NRC Cameroon 2023”, 2023.

⁹³ Ibid..

⁹⁴ Ibid..

⁹⁵ Phone Survey.

⁹⁶ KII 7, NRC.

⁹⁷ Phone Survey.

⁹⁸ KII 6.1, NRC; KII 11, Community Leader.

⁹⁹ Phone Survey.

¹⁰⁰ KII 7, NRC.

¹⁰¹ KII 7, NRC.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ KII 7, NRC.

reconcile disputes but also contributed to longer-term changes in attitudes towards women's access to land.¹⁰⁶

As outlined in the project's technical proposal, under the WASH component, committees were designed for equal gender representation, giving both men and women a voice in decision-making processes around water and sanitation management.¹⁰⁷ Women now hold positions in decision-making bodies.¹⁰⁸ Gender-segregated latrines were also built to improve the dignity and safety of women and girls and reduce their risk of GBV when accessing water points and sanitation facilities.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, some respondents highlighted misuse of NRC's installed infrastructures as a challenge when using project-constructed facilities.¹¹⁰ Despite locking the toilet, neighbours and school children have repeatedly broken the door, emptied the water, misusing the facilities overall.¹¹¹

In addition to WASH initiatives, the project aimed to enhance women's ability to respond to their household needs through agricultural training, food, and cash, which helped support their families.¹¹² A female respondent mentioned that the seeds provided during the project implementation benefited her and her husband, enhancing their ability to sustain their livelihood.¹¹³ Another respondent emphasised that the assistance provided through MPCA allowed her to cover her children's educational expenses.¹¹⁴ Others explained how they used the financial assistance to purchase seeds such as beans, corn, and plantains during the planting season, which resulted in harvesting practices that contributed to their family's food security.¹¹⁵

The project also focused on addressing the specific needs of **children and adolescents**. By providing menstrual hygiene materials and promoting hygiene practices, the initiative helped reduce barriers to education and overall well-being. In this regard, a community leader highlighted that these efforts not only improved girl's well-being but also positively impacted their participation in community life.¹¹⁶ Additionally, the installation of accessible water taps benefited women and children, who previously walked long distances for water.¹¹⁷ With the new taps nearby, they can now easily access clean water, saving time and effort.¹¹⁸

Finally, NRC's programming aimed to be inclusive for **persons living with disabilities (LwD)**. During the distribution and registration process for IDPs, one participant reported that, despite being far back in the line, they were called forward and assisted first, highlighting the recognition of his condition by the field team.¹¹⁹ In addition, in SW, some community members took the initiative to deliver assistance to individuals who were unable to attend the distribution site.¹²⁰ However, respondents with disabilities did not report receiving any specific information or support tailored to their condition.¹²¹

8.2.3 Effectiveness of Project Strategies and Processes in Achieving Positive Outcomes

Project participant targeting strategies have enabled the identification of concerned communities living in vulnerable conditions, as well as IDPs and returnees. To do so, prior to the implementation, NRC's local partners mapped the engaged communities to identify and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007", April 2, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ KII 9, NRC.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ FGD 4, IDPs NW.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ KII 16, Community Leader.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ FGD2, IDPs SW.

¹²⁰ KII11, Community Leader.

¹²¹ FGD 2, IDPs SW; FGD 3, IDPs NW.

profile IDPs, seeking to direct assistance to those most in need.¹²² This process involved community-based enumerators who were familiar with the local context and conducted household visits to verify eligibility.¹²³ While respondents found this approach effective, they acknowledged that greater community involvement in subsequent stages - such as consolidation and analysis of all gathered data, as well as finalising the project design before implementation, which are largely managed by NRC - would have been more beneficial.¹²⁴ Currently, this process limits the involvement of local partners and concerned communities in shaping the final project design. Consequently, once the projects are approved and discussed with donors, they are presented as completed initiatives rather than as collaboratively developed plans.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, enhancing community involvement throughout the entire project cycle could lead to more effective and relevant project outcomes, including benefits to achieve **positive outcomes of the project, in terms of safety, dignity, of communities as well as access to essential services (EQ 2.3).**¹²⁶

Counter-verification processes were established to ensure that only individuals meeting the eligibility criteria received assistance. A selection plan with a defined criteria was developed and communicated to communities during the selection phase.¹²⁷ Among the criteria for selection was a specified number of IDPs, returnees, and vulnerable host community members. Respondents indicated that the required percentage of identified IDPs is often quite high, with some NRC projects necessitating up to 80% of the identified population to be IDPs.¹²⁸

Although community leaders reported that these criteria have helped build trust and NRC's acceptance among community members,¹²⁹ some frustration and tension have emerged.¹³⁰ This frustration has been exacerbated by perceptions that local leaders attempted to replace eligible recipients' names with those of their friends, due to financial incentives related to NRC training activities.¹³¹ While these specific cases require close attention and verification from NRC to address potential fraud, in the context of the volatile security situation in the NW SW, where needs are exceptionally high and communities face significant challenges, these sentiments are understandable and do not inherently undermine the quality of NRC's interventions. Nevertheless, improving communication strategies regarding project resources and the number of individuals who can receive assistance could help alleviate some of this frustration.

In addition, reinforcing the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) process through collective reflection on the outcomes and lessons learned, to ensure findings of the projects are communicated not only to donors, partners, civil society, but also to the community, could not only improve communities' understanding of project outcomes, but also create a stronger culture of accountability towards project participants and non- participants. In addition, it could contribute to improved practices and outcomes in future projects.¹³²

“Collective reflection at the end of a project is vital, but it often lacks involvement from the community.” (KII 13)

¹²² KII1, Implementing Partner.

¹²³ FGD2, IDPs NW.

¹²⁴ KII13, NRC.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ KII11, Community Leader.

¹²⁸ KII1, Implementing Partner.

¹²⁹ KII11, Community Leader.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² KII13, NRC.

8.2.4 Underlying Factors Influencing the Project's Performance

Within the context of the project, numerous underlying factors influenced performance of the project, which were beyond the project's control (EQ 2.4). The conflict-affected NWSW regions of Cameroon are faced with multi-dimensional crises, most notably the ongoing Anglophone crisis.¹³³ As mentioned in the Efficiency sub-section of this report, lockdowns and access constraints in the NWSW regions impacted the project implementation.¹³⁴ Roadblocks, shootings, IED explosions, and armed conflict frequently disrupted the project timeline, and obtaining permissions and authorisations further complicated the adherence to the project timeline.^{135,136,137} Road conditions, worsened by the rainy season, delayed meetings and the implementation of certain activities, particularly in remote areas.^{138,139} Additionally, targeting hard-to-reach areas presented connectivity challenges, affecting project components like the phone line of the CFM.¹⁴⁰

From 2020 to 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic added another layer of complexity to the project. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the already strained health and WASH systems in Cameroon.^{141,142} NRC had to integrate COVID-19 response into its interventions, particularly as insecurity and attacks on health facilities limited access to care in the NWSW regions.^{143,144}

Specific to the Protection/ICLA component, despite the National Bureau of Civil Status (BUNEC)'s involvement, delays in document production and distribution were compounded by material shortages and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Although NRC advocated for improved processes, there were still some delays, mainly because of external factors, especially the involvement of legal and civil registration authorities.^{145,146} One of the external factors affecting performance was the bureaucratic process involved in issuing birth certificate booklets.^{147,148} Identification challenges also caused document duplication, though it is unclear whether this was due to NRC or government authorities.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, there were reports of minor irregularities. A respondent mentioned minor corruption, where teachers requested money to fill out forms. In one case, a teacher asked a parent for 1,500 francs, which led to an intervention by the CFM committee, as they found the action inappropriate.¹⁵⁰ In a crisis context, people's hesitation to disclose personal information, particularly their identities, made it difficult for Protection/ICLA to adhere to the legal guidelines, and the bureaucracy only added to these challenges.¹⁵¹

Respondents shared sentiments about unfair cash distribution processes, largely due to misunderstandings about the selection criteria. It appeared that the registration process favoured individuals from certain backgrounds, and rumours falsely circulated that NRC would distribute more cash.¹⁵² Examples highlighted during the interviews showcase the

¹³³ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007", April 2, 2020.

¹³⁴ KII 5, Donor; KII 10, NRC.

¹³⁵ KII 11, Community Leader.

¹³⁶ KII 13, NRC; KII 8, Cluster Partner.

¹³⁷ NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Performance Report, Fiscal Year 2023," May 2023.

¹³⁸ KII 11, Community Leader; KII 16, Community Leader.

¹³⁹ KII 16, Community Leader.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ NRC, "Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19: United Nations. Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19: United Nations Coordinated Appeal April", December 2020.

¹⁴² NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007", April 2, 2020.

¹⁴³ NRC, "Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19: United Nations. Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19: United Nations Coordinated Appeal April", December 2020.

¹⁴⁴ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007", April 2, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ KII 3, Implementing Partner.

¹⁴⁶ KII 7, NRC; KII 13, NRC; KII 16, Community Leader.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ KII 3, Implementing Partner.

¹⁵⁰ KII 15, Community Leader.

¹⁵¹ FGD 1, IDPs SW; FGD 2, IDPs SW.

¹⁵² KII 15, Community Leader.

challenges in ID registration, involving an IDP using another woman's ID to register, which led to the CFM committee stepping in to resolve the issue and retrieve the items.¹⁵³ This prompted some individuals to charge fees to add names to the distribution list.¹⁵⁴ However, a respondent raised the alarm, exposing the fraud, and the person responsible disappeared.¹⁵⁵

NRC, the humanitarian cluster systems, and its partners sought to mitigate these challenges by expanding communication and collaboration with local partnerships, improving HCIMA, and enhancing community-driven feedback mechanisms.¹⁵⁶ Strong partnerships enabled better prediction of lockdowns, which allowed for effective prevention and planning.¹⁵⁷ Monthly updates to the donor and good relations with local actors helped facilitate project implementation in such environments.¹⁵⁸ The donor also recommended further contingency planning to reduce the impact of these challenges.¹⁵⁹

8.2.5 Assessment of the Level of Participation of Communities Throughout the Project

NRC's community engagement efforts across different project years highlight a **consistent approach to involving project participants in the identification, implementation, and, to a lesser extent, monitoring and evaluation (EQ 2.5)**. The following paragraphs summarise the level of engagement across phases, providing an overview of trends and consistency over time.

Box 2 Summary box of the Assessment of the Level of Participation of Communities throughout the different cycles of the First Phase of the project

“Emergency Assistance and NFI Support for Vulnerable Communities Affected by Displacement in the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon” (2020-2022)

- **Implementation:** Project participants were indirectly involved in the design of NRC's project. Qualitative data collection, including needs and surveys, conducted within 90 days from start of grants, gathered insights from participants related to the population's needs and were then incorporated into the project design. Yet, involving participants in additional aspects of the project formulation would have enhanced its effectiveness. Community leaders and local actors were involved in the selection of participants in vulnerable situations. In addition, to foster community ownership, project participants were included in the delivery of some activities, such as WASH (e.g., WASH committees, and location identification), through the creation of WASH committees.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** The project aimed to include communities by providing CFM, conducting PDMs, and holding quarterly meetings.

During the first phase of the project (2020 - 2022), under the title “Emergency Assistance and NFI Support for Vulnerable Communities Affected by Displacement in the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon”, NRC engaged project participants by conducting needs and baseline surveys in the project areas. Representatives from affected communities were informed about the purpose, timeline, and objectives of the project.^{160,161,162} One way of doing this was through FGDs to understand the needs of the populations related to the different types of services NRC was able to provide, such as hygiene promotion under the

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ KII 13, NRC; KII 16, Community Leader.

¹⁵⁷ KII 13, NRC.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ KII 5, Donor.

¹⁶⁰ NRC, “OFDA Program Performance Report,” 2021.

¹⁶¹ KII 1, Implementing Partner.

¹⁶² KII 10, NRC.

WASH component. During these discussions, information on communities' needs was gathered from community members, some of whom also supported the project implementation, while others became project participants.¹⁶³ Yet, a community leader observed instances in which the information gathered during these discussions did not always accurately reflect the conditions and priority needs of these communities. This suggests that information-gathering tools developed by NRC were not always adequate and sensitive enough to allow participants to speak freely about their condition without fear of stigmatisation.¹⁶⁴ Organising individual interviews, as opposed to group interviews, with people living in extreme vulnerable conditions could have allowed certain individuals to speak more freely.

“So, many of the people living in higher poor conditions did not explicitly describe what they were going through but wanted to show off and as a result were not classified to receive the assistance based on their biased nature when answering the questions.” (KII 11)

The **identification phase** of project participants was based on needs assessments and discussions with community members during focus group discussions, seeking to give the community a role in determining who would receive support.^{165,166} The identification of project participants was guided by gaps in the current 4w matrix at a cluster level.¹⁶⁷ Community input was mainly sought to identify areas, needs, and target groups rather than involve project participants in the actual design and implementation of the project itself.¹⁶⁸ However, in 2022, the method developed to emphasise stakeholder involvement and active community engagement in the selection process. This included: i) engaging and sensitising the community, ii) conducting a community wealth ranking and establishing selection criteria, iii) selecting project participants, iv) compiling the participants list, v) verifying the list in a community assembly for contestation or approval, and vi) validating the final list with stakeholders.¹⁶⁹

“The community leaders, people who are based in the community are doing the profiling and doing targeting in the community. We give target data and sit with community leaders; we go through the names, according to ranking and community” (KII 6)

Throughout the **implementation phase**, NRC aimed to involve project participants, most noticeably through WASH, MPCA, and Agriculture. In regards to WASH, the construction of WASH infrastructure was made participatory through the establishment of sanitation and WASH committees and the training of hygiene promoters, all with a focus on gender inclusivity.¹⁷⁰ NRC planned to consult women and girls on their preference for latrine design and support of gender-balanced hygiene.¹⁷¹ The construction of emergency latrines was planned with the intention that, once completed, they would be handed over to the project participants for ownership and management to promote project sustainability.¹⁷² The WASH committees, trained as part of this project, were and are being equipped with skills to perform repairs and maintenance of the water points, further ensuring the long-term sustainability of these resources.^{173,174} Moreover, local labour and materials were used for constructing WASH facilities, and latrines were handed over to project participants for ownership and NFI Kits were manufactured and procured nationally, positively impacting the communities'

¹⁶³ KII 1, Implementing Partner.

¹⁶⁴ KII 11, Community Leader.

¹⁶⁵ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

¹⁶⁶ KII 12, Community Leader.

¹⁶⁷ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

¹⁶⁸ KII 1, Implementing Partner; KII 6 NRC; FGD 3, IDPs NW; FGD 1, IDPs SW; FGD 2, IDPs SW; FGD 4, IDPs NW.

¹⁶⁹ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

economic development.¹⁷⁵ An implementation partner mentioned that the people who distributed the NFIs were part of the community, increasing communities' trust, support and acceptance.¹⁷⁶ However, these implementing partner respondents also noted that some challenges raised when working with community members, particularly in terms of communication.¹⁷⁷ Dialect differences can lead to misunderstandings, as NRC implementers may not always be familiar with local dialects, resulting in information sometimes getting "lost in translation."¹⁷⁸

In the **monitoring and evaluation** phase, communities received information on feedback and complaints mechanisms, which are to be integral from the outset (further explained in the next EQ).¹⁷⁹ The project design aimed to include community involvement through quarterly meetings, during which project participants would be updated on the project's progress.¹⁸⁰ These meetings aimed to provide an opportunity for community members to express their opinions on the activities and offer recommendations for actions that programme staff can take to enhance the project's quality.¹⁸¹

Box 3 Summary box of the Assessment of the Level of Participation of Communities throughout the Second Phase of the Project

Integrated Emergency Aid for Conflict-Affected Populations in the Northwest and Southwest Region of Cameroon (2022-2023)

- **Identification:** NRC continued to involve community members within the identification/targeting phase.
- **Implementation:** NRC used focal points to support the implementation of the project in mitigating potential delays. Within WASH activities, NRC continued to elect committees and provide them with training.
- **M&E:** Community leaders and selected focal points ensured the monitoring and smooth implementation of the project.

During the **identification phase** of the final implementation of the project (2023 - 2024), NRC aimed to involve the local community, including quarter heads, quarter secretaries, youth leaders, IDP leaders, and women's and men's representatives, in developing the selection criteria.¹⁸²

Regarding the **WASH** activities, NRC continued to elect committees in the NW and SW regions.¹⁸³ Project participants continued to actively be involved in the construction process from the beginning, fostering a sense of ownership over the infrastructure.¹⁸⁴ Particularly, following the project presentation, NRC aimed to engage in consultations with communities to select sites and finalise designs for waterpoint rehabilitations in the NW, as well as a solar-powered borehole and latrines in the SW.¹⁸⁵ The communities approved the designs on bills of quantities (BoQs), allowing NRC to proceed with the procurement process to identify contractors for constructing shared household latrines.¹⁸⁶ NRC collaborated with community

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ KII 2, Implementing Partner.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ NRC, "OFDA Program Performance Report: Emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South-West and Northwest regions of Cameroon", 2021.

¹⁸⁰ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213", July 1, 2022.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ NRC, "Informal Update on Progress to BHA (Award No. 720BHA23GR00237): Period 19 September to 15 November 2023. BHA Informal Update Report CMFM2310," November 15, 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

leaders, local technicians, and the district engineer to oversee the progress of WASH infrastructure rehabilitation and construction.¹⁸⁷ WASH committees continued to receive training and were supplied with repair and maintenance tools to continue managing water points, supporting the sustainability of the project.¹⁸⁸ Training sessions were conducted in collaboration with technical departments of government ministries, establishing fruitful partnerships with local entities.¹⁸⁹ In LFS activities, community members played an active role in the distribution of cash through e-vouchers.¹⁹⁰

Regarding **M&E**, within WASH activities, community leaders provided feedback to NRC's technical teams, who in turn delivered remote technical assistance.¹⁹¹ To ensure the effective use of cash distributed through MPCA, NRC conducted orientation sessions before each distribution, in which community members were selected and trained to provide ongoing support and guidance to ensure proper follow-up and effective utilisation of the assistance.¹⁹²

Box 4 Awareness of Community Consultations

Community consultations¹⁹³

According to Samuel Hall's survey results, despite the occurrence of community consultations, awareness of these events was not widespread among the population. Less than half of the respondents reported being aware of the consultations, while a significant portion remained uncertain. Awareness levels were somewhat higher in the South West region compared to the North West, suggesting regional variations in the dissemination of information about these consultations.

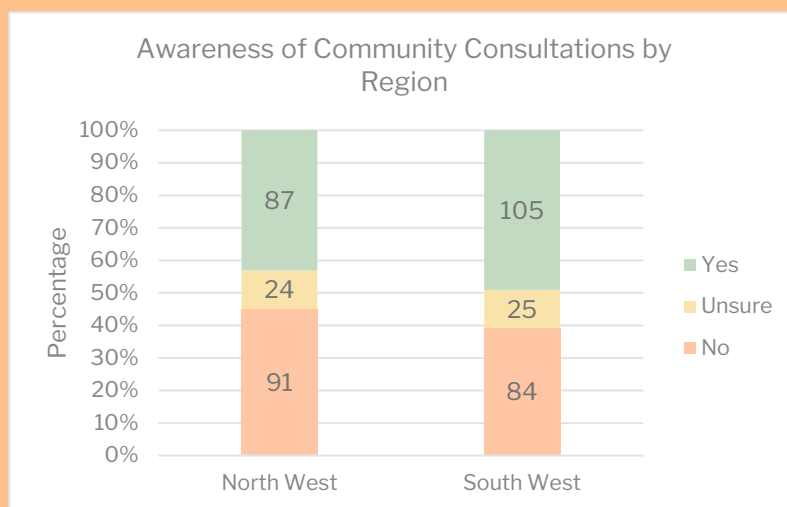


Figure 5 Awareness of Community Consultations by Region

The community consultations engaged a diverse range of participants, including traditional leaders like chiefs and elders, alongside representatives from local government, such as council members and mayors. Religious leaders from various denominations were also involved, reflecting their influence within the community. A particular emphasis was placed

¹⁸⁷ NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ KII 6.1, NRC.

¹⁹¹ NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Phone Survey.

on community workers, especially in the health sector, highlighting local health concerns. Youth representatives and women's groups were included to ensure broad perspectives, and grassroots engagement was encouraged through the participation of teachers and general community members.

8.2.6 Integration of Complaints and Feedback into Project Activities

The integration of complaints and feedback into the day-to-day implementation of activities (EQ 2.6) has been an important component of the NRC's M&E system, particularly through the use of a CFM.^{194,195,196, 197} The CFM enabled NRC to gather input from project participants, WASH committees, and community leaders throughout both project phases. This allowed feedback to be incorporated in accordance with the "Do-No-Harm" principle¹⁹⁸ and aligned with the Core Humanitarian Standard,¹⁹⁹ fostering community engagement and enabling adaptive management based on real-time needs and concerns.²⁰⁰

The M&E system aimed to employ a variety of tools, including baseline assessments, Pre and Post Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) surveys, data collection mechanisms, and the CFM itself.²⁰¹ These tools facilitated progress monitoring against key performance indicators and allowed for the systematic collection of feedback throughout the project phases.²⁰² Various feedback channels - including telephone lines (referred to by respondents as the 'NRC hotline'²⁰³), WhatsApp, and in-person consultations (through visits, meetings, and distribution events²⁰⁴) - aimed to enable project participants to share input in ways that worked best for them.^{205,206,207} Community consultations seemed to have had a meaningful impact on how the project was designed and adjusted along the way.²⁰⁸

During the second phase, additional feedback mechanisms were introduced. A dedicated CFM focal point ensured regular follow-up on all complaints and feedback.^{209, 210} The availability of the CFM was communicated to the broader community through banners, flyers, and orientations, as well as before the distribution of NFIs and during activities such as sensitisation and training, ensuring widespread awareness among project participants.^{211, 212, 213}

During implementation, regular assessments - including Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) and quarterly community meetings - were conducted.^{214, 215} Feedback from WASH committees, community leaders, and project participants allowed NRC to adapt activities to

¹⁹⁴NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007", April 2, 2020.

¹⁹⁵ NRC, "OFDA Program Performance Report: Emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South-West and Northwest regions of Cameroon", 2021.

¹⁹⁶ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213", July 1, 2022.

¹⁹⁷ NRC, "USAID/Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs Technical Narrative - NRC Cameroon 2023", 2023.

¹⁹⁸ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213", July 1, 2022.

¹⁹⁹ NRC, "Baseline Outcome Monitoring Report CMFM2310."

²⁰⁰ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213", July 1, 2022.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ KII2, Implementing Partner; KII11, Community Leader.

²⁰⁴ BHA Semi-Annual Performance Report, Fiscal Year 2023.

²⁰⁵ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213", July 1, 2022.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ KII10, NRC.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007", April 2, 2020.

²¹² NRC, "BHA Semi Annual Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴NRC, "Endline Outcome Monitoring Report CMFM2007: Emergency Assistance and NFI Support for Vulnerable Communities Affected by Displacement in the South-West and Northwest Regions of Cameroon," 2021.

²¹⁵ NRC, "Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213", July 1, 2022.

meet evolving needs.^{216,217} For example, feedback during NFI distributions led to immediate corrective actions, such as replacing broken items.²¹⁸ In some cases, tools for shelter construction (e.g., digging materials)²¹⁹ were removed after the first phase of the project based on recipient feedback.

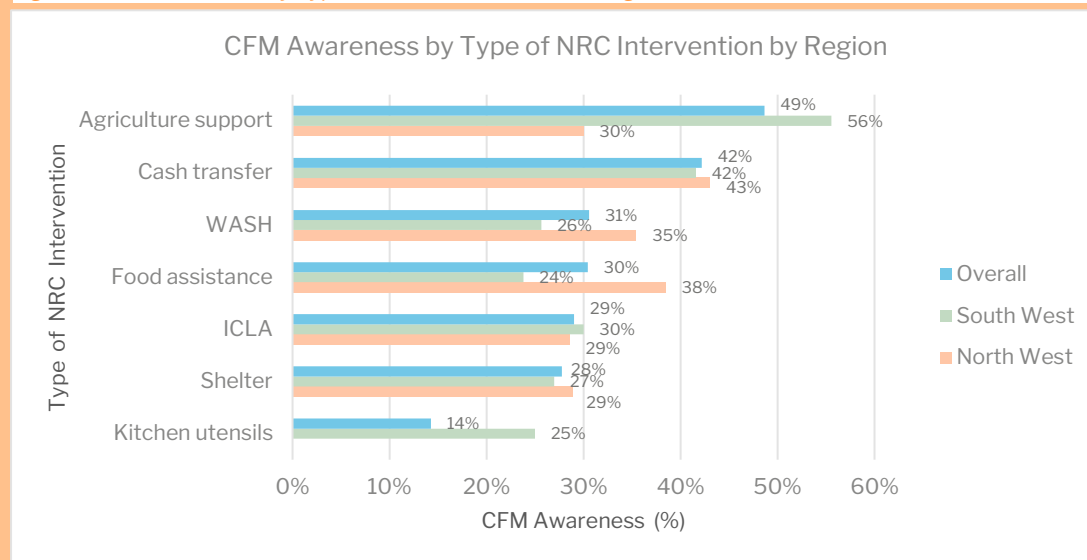
While the CFM proved effective in capturing feedback, some challenges were identified. In certain areas, only three call lines were being used, some project participants in hard to reach areas with limited network coverage were unable to reach out to share complaints and feedback they might have had.²²⁰ Additionally, the system was primarily designed for adults with mobile phone access, presenting difficulties for child-headed households to share their feedback too.^{221,222} In response, NRC planned to expand the CFM’s coverage, particularly in areas with limited access, and introduce child-friendly feedback mechanisms.²²³ However, despite these efforts, some participants were still unable to reach NRC or experienced delays in being contacted.

Box 5 Awareness and Effectiveness of the Feedback and Complaint Mechanism

Feedback and complaint mechanism²²⁴

According to Samuel Hall’s survey, awareness of NRC’s Feedback and Complaint Mechanism (CFM) remains relatively low, with only 29% of respondents across both regions reporting that they are familiar with the system. Among those aware of the CFM, 54% find it to be effective, though there remains a significant portion (46%) who either question its effectiveness or are unsure about its impact.

Figure 6 CFM Awareness by Type of NRC Intervention and Region



When disaggregated by type of intervention, project participants of agriculture support programmes demonstrated the highest awareness of the CFM, with nearly half (49%) being informed about it. Cash transfer recipients followed closely, with 42% aware of the CFM. WASH, Protection/ICLA and food assistance project participants showed slightly lower awareness levels at around 30%. Awareness was lowest among recipients of shelter

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ NRC, “BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon”, 2024.

²¹⁸ NRC, “BHA Semi Annual Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon”, 2021.

²¹⁹ KII 10, NRC.

²²⁰ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213”, July 1, 2022.

²²¹ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

²²² FGD 1, IDPs SW; FGD 3, IDPs NW.

²²³ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

²²⁴ Phone Survey.

assistance (28%) and kitchen utensils (14.29%), suggesting a potential gap in communication with those accessing these particular forms of support.

8.2.7 Effectiveness of integrated approach to address the needs of populations in vulnerable situations?

The integrated approach adopted by NRC in its humanitarian response to conflict-affected populations in the NW SW regions of Cameroon was seen as relatively effective in addressing the complex needs of vulnerable populations (EQ 2.7) by NRC's staff and its project participants.²²⁵ The integrated approach seemed to contribute to ensuring that humanitarian assistance addressed various vulnerabilities simultaneously.²²⁶ By combining services across multiple sectors, such as WASH, food assistance, protection/ICLA, and shelter, NRC sought to provide a holistic response to the communities in need.^{227,228,229} On that note, a respondent from the donor organisation highlighted NRC's ability to integrate together multiple sectors, which may have ensured a strong referral system from one service to another.²³⁰ The donor also expressed that, despite initial concerns that NRC's approach might be too ambitious, NRC generally managed to deliver effectively.²³¹

Nevertheless, certain limitations in fully integrating the response in a conflict setting were observed. In some cases, interventions seemed to appear fragmented across different communities, giving the project a more programmatic feel rather than an integrated one.²³² This somewhat fragmented approach sometimes appeared to limit the holistic impact at the individual or household level, as highlighted by two respondents, who expressed concerns over the lack of complete integration of sector activities within certain project locations.²³³ Not everyone in the community received access to multiple forms of assistance. In some cases, NRC opted to provide only one type of service to individuals in order to assist a greater number of people, which limited the implementation of the integrated approach. For example, IDPs in one community received food assistance while another community benefited from WASH or shelter interventions.²³⁴ Additionally, a respondent from the implementation team noted that the integration between sectors, while beneficial in many cases, could be further strengthened.²³⁵ For instance, better collaboration between WASH, Protection/ICLA and shelter interventions would have been needed to ensure better coordination and integrated response.^{236,237} NRC shared similar concerns, noting that integration often happened more at the programmatic level across years, rather than within a single community or project cycle, leading to a partial integration, instead of a fully cohesive and holistic approach.^{238,239}

“So, I would say there was an integrated approach, but not 100% because we had some areas of divergence, because most of the activities do not start at the same time. So, for example, we had project communities where the WASH had already implemented for the past projects, and now we identified needs for LFS. So, I would say it was complementary over the years, but then we will not say there was integrated approach at the level of the project, but at the level of the entire program, there was a lot of integration” (KII 10)

²²⁵ KII 3, Government Stakeholder; KII 5, Donor; KII 7, NRC; KII 10, NRC; KII 13, NRC; FGD 1, IDPs SW.

²²⁶ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2007”, April 2, 2020.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ NRC, “Technical Narrative, NRC Cameroon CMFM2213”, July 1, 2022.

²²⁹ KII 11, Community Leader.

²³⁰ KII 5, Donor.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² KII 2, Implementing Partner; KII 10, NRC.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ KII 2 Implementing Partner.

²³⁵ KII 7, NRC.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ KII 2, Implementing Partner.

²³⁸ KII 10, NRC.

²³⁹ Ibid.

8.3 Coherence: How well was the intervention coordinated within the broader humanitarian landscape?

Criteria	Dimension Measured	Score
Coherence	EQ 3.1 To what extent was NRC's response coordinated with the broader humanitarian response in the programme area and how did this coordination enhance project outcomes?	Good - NRC is recognised as a key partner due to its proactive engagement in various coordination platforms. A key strength lies in its effective collaboration with partners, at local, national and international level, which helped to minimise duplication of efforts in humanitarian assistance, as well as in knowledge sharing and capacity building in its areas of expertise.
	EQ 3.2 Were other partners involved in providing holistic response (for example, referrals to SGBV or child protection services, referral for protection case management and individual assistance, etc)?	Inconclusive - Although NRC trained and worked with partners on referral mechanisms, the absence of cases to be referred does not provide sufficient data to assess the level of engagement of other partners in the holistic response.

NRC's strong presence in the NWSW regions positions it as a key player among humanitarian actors, facilitating effective coordination within the broader humanitarian response. Figure 5 below outlines the main stakeholders involved in this project, with whom NRC collaborated. A detailed stakeholder mapping is available in Annex 7 providing more information on each actor's role in the project. Overall, NRC's HCIMA efforts - at the local level; sector-level; high-level, and through CHINGO - have been recognised as effective in optimising resources and improving the overall impact of the humanitarian response, with areas of improvement that could enhance the overall response (EQ 3.1).²⁴⁰

Figure 7 Key Project Stakeholders



²⁴⁰ KII8, Cluster Partner.

At a **local level**, NRC partnered with organisations such as AMEF and SIDREP, to implement interventions in remote areas.²⁴¹ These local partners possess a deep understanding of their communities and have established access to these difficult-to-reach areas, which facilitated the implementation of the project there. Their contributions were essential for conducting assessments, evaluations, and profiling of project participants, as well as fostering community acceptance of NRC's work.²⁴² The implementing partners emphasised the collaborative relationship they maintained with NRC throughout the project, noting its effective functioning.²⁴³ Meetings were held before and during the project implementation to address progress and challenges, while joint field visits allowed both parties to assess ground realities together.²⁴⁴ A community leader particularly acknowledged NRC's coordination efforts at the local level, through conducting prior assessments to identify areas where other actors were already providing assistance.²⁴⁵ This enabled NRC to offer complementary services, such as food or farming tools, where shelter kits had already been provided, ensuring that the project meets immediate and intermediate needs without duplication.²⁴⁶

“Concerning new humanitarian assistance, NRC would always ask us about the organisations that had come before them, what they did, and to what extent. This helped us avoid duplicating things we didn't need. In other instances, they asked us to specify what we really needed, because a person cannot ask for cocoyam and you bring them plantain. This coordination helped ensure that the aid provided had an immediate and effective impact on the people.” (KII 11)

Moreover, given the risks in the NW and SW regions, NRC collaborated with local and traditional authorities for civil documentation, particularly in high-risk areas like Mbengwi.²⁴⁷ NRC provided key information on HLP rights to both property owners and tenants, which helped prevent forced evictions and reduce tenancy disputes.²⁴⁸ This support also changed landlords' attitudes toward tenancy agreements and property taxes. Initially, many landlords avoided formal agreements due to concerns about liabilities, but with guidance provided by NRC, they came to see the advantages of these agreements.²⁴⁹

Within the broader humanitarian space, NRC collaborates closely at the **sector-level coordination** with various actors to provide coordinated and complementary humanitarian aid to communities. In the NW SW regions, Clusters and working groups provide a platform for humanitarian actors to map their activities, discuss roles, and ensure complementary efforts, reducing competition and duplication.²⁵⁰ NRC serves as the co-lead of both the Shelter and WASH Clusters and actively participates in the Food Assistance, as well as Protection Clusters, under which it leads the HLP Area of Responsibility (AoR).²⁵¹ One of the methods NRC employed to ensure effective aid distribution was through displacement trackers, which helped identify suitable locations for LFS services.²⁵² This was coordinated with both the Food Assistance and WASH clusters, ensuring that distribution locations were selected based on the non-presence of other humanitarian actors in the area. Such coordination minimised duplication, allowing NRC to avoid communities where other partners were already addressing needs.²⁵³ Moreover, in the Protection Cluster, NRC has a

²⁴¹ NRC, “BHA Semi-Annual Performance Report”, 2024.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ KII1, Implementing Partner; KII2, Implementing Partner.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ KII11, Community Leader.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ NRC, “BHA Semi Annual Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon”, 2024.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ NRC, “BHA Semi Annual Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon”, 2024.

²⁵⁰ KII1, Implementing Partner.

²⁵¹ KII 10, NRC.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

key role in leading the coordination of HLP activities within the NWSW regions and trains humanitarian actors on HLP case management.²⁵⁴ Overall, at the cluster level, NRC was perceived as a key partner within the humanitarian landscape in NW SW, recognised for its commitment to collaboration and support for concerned communities.

"NRC is the co-facilitator of the cluster, and they are evolving the coordination of the six functions of the cluster. They support us with national NGOs. In terms of coordination, they are dedicated and committed. If I need support or visibility, NRC takes the lead. We work together in terms of coordination. They are very committed and very engaged in the sector." (KII 4)

NRC is also involved in **high-level strategic coordination** as a substitute INGOs' representative at the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) since 2019 and through the inter-cluster meetings facilitated by OCHA, which bring together national and international NGOs.²⁵⁵ These meetings, held monthly or quarterly, help align implementation plans and promote synergies among organisations during the project design and implementation period. A respondent noted that the collaboration happening during these meetings proves to be effective, enhancing the project's overall implementation.²⁵⁶ However, several respondents expressed concerns regarding NRC's capacity for cluster coordination, noting that, due to NRC's staff having multiple responsibilities, including fieldwork, they occasionally miss cluster meetings, which creates gaps in participation and may limit the overall effectiveness of NRC's cluster coordination efforts.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, another respondent suggested that enhancing coordination with the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) could present an opportunity for further improvement.²⁵⁸ Similar to NRC, the RRM interventions cover a wide range of sectors through an integrated response, including shelter, WASH, and protection for IDPs and returnees.²⁵⁹ By exploring potential synergies, NRC could amplify its humanitarian impact through stronger collaboration with the RRM. Lastly, from a localisation perspective, while the Cameroonian Humanitarian Organisations Initiative (CHOI) holds a seat within the HCT, concerns have been raised about its representativeness. Questions have also been raised about its efficiency and effectiveness within these structures, suggesting that local priorities may not be adequately reflected in decision-making processes.²⁶⁰

Through the **Cameroon Humanitarian INGOs (CHINGO)** forum, hosted by NRC, it equally established and led various platforms, including monthly INGO Country Directors meetings, quarterly Steering Committee meetings, HR-Administration and Heads of Programmes meetings, as well as the CHINGO Advocacy Working Group.²⁶¹ CHINGO also created a database of INGOs interventions and projects with implementing partners, which enhances transparency and allows for better tracking of humanitarian efforts across the region.²⁶² Local NGOs (LNGOs) are also involved, comprising half of the membership, alongside other civil society entities.²⁶³ However, in NW regions, local authorities are notably absent from these discussions due to the ongoing conflict.²⁶⁴

Throughout the project, NRC assisted CHINGO in coordinating and fostering collaboration among humanitarian and development INGOs, as well as between these organisations and

²⁵⁴ KII7, NRC.

²⁵⁵ NRC, "OFDA Program Performance Report: Emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South-West and Northwest regions of Cameroon", 2021.

²⁵⁶ KII1, Implementing Partner.

²⁵⁷ KII8, Cluster Partner.

²⁵⁸ KII5, Donor.

²⁵⁹ Omam, L., Metuge, A, "Rapid response mechanism in conflict-affected settings of Cameroon: lessons learned from a multisector intervention for internally displaced persons", *Journal of Global Health Reports*, 2023.

²⁶⁰ KII14, Cluster Partner.

²⁶¹ NRC, "BHA: NRC Cameroon Semi-Annual Performance Report", 2024.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ KII14, Cluster Partner.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

external stakeholders such as government authorities, civil society, UN agencies, diplomatic entities, and donors.²⁶⁵ Overall, these platforms facilitated coordinated humanitarian responses by addressing key issues such as duplication of efforts, common access challenges, and sharing of information, including lessons learned from ongoing projects and programmes.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, CHINGO's participation in the Localisation Working Group and other relevant forums allowed for the advocacy of localised approaches to humanitarian action, through sharing its own experience of working with local and national actors.²⁶⁷ This was reported as being particularly relevant given the operational context in the NW SW regions, where challenges such as demands for illegal payments, lockdowns imposed by NSAGs, and threats from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) significantly hinder access to concerned populations.²⁶⁸

Respondents outside NRC acknowledge NRC's effective coordination with humanitarian actors through CHINGO, highlighting this as a positive aspect of the project.²⁶⁹ During the project implementation, CHINGO expanded from 25 to 27 members, increasing opportunities for collaboration among international NGOs.²⁷⁰ This growth allowed more organisations to benefit from information sharing, advocacy, and services provided by CHINGO, ultimately enhancing the overall humanitarian response in NW SW.²⁷¹ However, a potential challenge affecting internal coordination at the CHINGO level is the decision by the plenary of Country Directors to dissolve the CHINGO advocacy working group. This decision has already led to a reduction in internal coordination meetings within the forum, which may limit opportunities for collaboration and information exchange among member organisations in the future.²⁷²

Box 6 Enhancing Localisation in Coordination Efforts

While NRC seeks to engage with local and national actors (L/NAs) in this project, further advocacy would continue strengthening the leadership, presence, and influence of L/NAs within humanitarian leadership and coordination mechanisms. The **NEAR monitoring framework**²⁷³ outlines the desired changes necessary to progress towards achieving localisation commitments.²⁷⁴ Additionally, it calls for increased representation of L/NAs in decision-making discussions, such as during Cluster meetings or the HCT, as well as greater recognition of their contributions to humanitarian response, ensuring that L/NAs have a voice in shaping humanitarian priorities and receive acknowledgment in reporting to donors.²⁷⁵ Continuing promoting the inclusion of L/NAs in these spaces could enhance access through local networks, demystify coordination mechanisms, and ensure that local priorities are adequately reflected in humanitarian agendas and plans.²⁷⁶

²⁶⁵ NRC, "BHA: NRC Cameroon Semi-Annual Performance Report", 2024.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ KII4, Cluster Partner; KII5, Donor.

²⁷⁰ NRC, "BHA: NRC Cameroon Semi-Annual Performance Report", 2024.

²⁷¹ NRC, "BHA: NRC Cameroon Semi-Annual Performance Report", 2024.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ NEAR, "Localisation performance measurement framework", 2021.

²⁷⁴ Samuel Hall, "Working with Local Actors in East Africa and Yemen", for NRC, 2023.

²⁷⁵ NEAR, "Localisation performance measurement framework", 2021.

²⁷⁶ IASC, "IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC HCIMA Mechanisms", 2021.

Regarding partners' involvement, NRC has collaborations with various partners (EQ 3.2).). In 2022, ICLA collaborated with UNFPA to conduct sensitisation on women's HLP rights.

Looking at referrals, in the NW region, a key NRC partner involved in the referral system is the Cameroon Baptist Convention, which, through its one-stop shop, is part of the holistic approach and contributes to responding to cases of abuse or neglect.²⁷⁷ Conversely, in the SW region, only two organisations - the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) - actively manage SGBV cases and are integrated into the referral system.²⁷⁸

To further strengthen its referral mechanisms, NRC conducts training sessions focused on the SGBV referral process as part of its broader capacity-building initiatives.²⁷⁹ During these sessions, the Protection/ICLA team provides referral forms and templates on how to conduct these referrals while emphasising the importance of obtaining consent before making any referrals, especially in cases involving sensitive issues like SGBV and child protection.²⁸⁰ Despite these efforts and mechanisms in place, respondents reported that NRC has not recorded any SGBV or GBV cases during the duration of this project.²⁸¹

Finally, other partners present in the region contributed towards a more integrated approach, including Doctors Without Borders (MSF), which provided critical medical care to individuals injured by stray bullets; the Red Cross Movement contributed by offering medical assistance,²⁸² or COMISUD- who implements for WFP and who supported the community by distributing food items.²⁸³

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ KII6, NRC.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ KII7, NRC.

²⁸¹ KII6, NRC.

²⁸² KII1, CL.

²⁸³ KII12, CL.

8.4 Sustainability: Will the intervention last?

Criteria	Dimension Measured	Score
Sustainability	EQ 4.1 Are there any tangible aspects of the interventions implemented that offer potential for the sustainability of the results achieved?	Good - Although this is an emergency response, the project has offered tangible outcomes that offer potential sustainable benefits across each of the service areas implemented beyond the project duration.
	EQ 4.2 How has the project contributed to sustainable solutions for displaced individuals and communities, ensuring long-term benefits beyond the programme duration?	Adequate - The project has focused on collaborating with communities to achieve sustainable outcomes. However, some activities have faced challenges maintaining long-term benefits due to a need for additional training and resources.

NRC's engagement with local communities throughout the project, including sector-specific training and involving them in implementation and infrastructure maintenance, has **created potential for the sustainability of the project results (EQ 4.1)**. The focus on capacity-building reflects a shift in NRC and its donors' approach, moving from short-term responses toward a long-term strategy aimed at equipping households with the skills and resources necessary for self-sufficiency.²⁸⁴ **Some of these efforts have contributed to specific sustainable solutions for displaced individuals and communities (EQ 4.2)**.

Under the **WASH** component, respondents recognised that hygiene promotion efforts, particularly among children, have resulted in a certain shift in community mentality, with practices such as hand washing and cleaning fruits becoming increasingly embedded habits.²⁸⁵ Moreover, several respondents noted that infrastructure construction, including water points and latrines, has offered benefits for sanitation and living conditions of concerned communities.²⁸⁶ However, the sustainability of these structures relies on continued maintenance, which participants raised concerns about potential water supply disruptions due to insufficient resources to ensure this maintenance.²⁸⁷ In fact, despite the project's training for water management committees and provision of maintenance tools and protective equipment,²⁸⁸ recent data revealed gaps in water supply, including inadequate quantity and quality, high rates of waterborne diseases among children, non-functional sanitation facilities in homes, and a lack of hygiene resources like soap.²⁸⁹

For **Shelter and Settlement**, specific initiatives contributed to the long-term resilience of communities. For instance, the provision of tarpaulins has caused both immediate and intermediate outcomes, as they have enabled IDPs to rebuild homes destroyed by fire, allowing them to rest securely in a sheltered environment.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, respondents have reported long-term gains with the introduction of solar panels and water storage containers, which provide reliable access to electricity and improve water storage capabilities. These initiatives have addressed immediate needs in cooking and shelter conditions while also

²⁸⁴ KII1, Implementing Partner.

²⁸⁵ KII15, Community Leader, FGD3, IDPs NW.

²⁸⁶ KII5, Donor.

²⁸⁷ KII2, Implementing Partner.

²⁸⁸ NRC, "BHA Final Programme Performance Report: emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South West and North West regions of Cameroon", 2022.

²⁸⁹ NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

²⁹⁰ KII12, Community Leader.

fostering long-term well-being and resilience, providing households with more robust living environments that can better adapt to future needs.²⁹¹

Looking at **Multipurpose Cash Assistance**, the cash assistance provided project participants with flexibility, allowing them to make decisions based on their most pressing needs. Notably, some recipients were able to transform the emergency cash into long-term economic opportunities, such as starting small businesses or investing in agriculture (e.g., palm tree cultivation), thus creating sustainable economic opportunities.²⁹²

Capacity-building activities focused on income generation under the **Agricultural Support** component, particularly through market gardening, have shown potential in enhancing the self-resilience of project participants.²⁹³ Skills in growing vegetables like tomatoes and okra, now sold in markets, equip farmers to continue farming and generating income beyond the project²⁹⁴ Some participants who were also involved in livelihood, food security (LFS), and MPC activities have expanded operations by renting larger plots, reflecting increased agricultural productivity.²⁹⁵ In addition, the Common Initiative Groups (CIG) was established among farmers post-project, which further promotes scalability by sharing plots and fostering long-term food security - highlighting a successful collaborative effort fostered during implementation.²⁹⁶

The **Protection/ICLA** services work closely with communities engaging in HLP and LCD, guided by an exit strategy.²⁹⁷ Specifically, through Protection/ICLA services, NRC strengthens community dispute resolution mechanisms and provides training to residents, equipping them with the necessary skills to solve conflicts collaboratively through mediation, conciliation and negotiation.²⁹⁸ Additionally, NRC has trained local NGOs to provide ongoing HLP and LCD support, and they are involved in raising awareness and assisting residents in securing legal identities and civil documentation. In particular, collaboration with BUNEC, the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), and local councils has been key in enhancing community capacity to provide civil status documents.²⁹⁹ For IDPs, obtaining these documents is critical, as they enable access to essential services and strengthen their legal rights in the long term.³⁰⁰ As one key informant noted:

"Having a civil status document has an impact for a lifetime." (KII 1)

However, some respondents expressed concerns that upcoming elections may threaten the project's sustainability gains. They highlighted that while initial progress on birth certificates was swift following the project launch, election-related uncertainties could disrupt these achievements, particularly due to potential impacts on ongoing collaboration with government stakeholders.³⁰¹

Advocacy efforts through the project are also anticipated to have a lasting impact, even if immediate results are not visible yet. According to a respondent, revisions to certain laws are already underway, suggesting potential long-term changes.³⁰² Similarly, advocacy for women's HLP rights is expected to advance gender equality in land ownership, further

²⁹¹ FGD3, IDPs NW.

²⁹² KII12, Community Leader.

²⁹³ KII1, Implementing Partner.

²⁹⁴ FGD1, IDPs SW.

²⁹⁵ KII2, Implementing Partner.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ NRC, "BHA Semi-Annual Programme Performance Report: Integrated Emergency aid for conflicted-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest region of Cameroon", 2024.

³⁰⁰ KII3, Government Stakeholder; KII7, NRC.

³⁰¹ KII7, NRC.

³⁰² Ibid.

supporting the sustainability of these initiatives³⁰³ However, these gains could also be affected by the upcoming 2025 elections in Cameroon.

Finally, in terms of **HCIMA**, NRC has collaborated with local NGOs (LNGOs) as described in the previous section. These partnerships are part of an exit strategy that aims to sustain project outcomes through local partners, beyond the project duration. In this regard, NRC has focused on building the LNGOs' capacity in humanitarian response to secure these gains.³⁰⁴ To further enhance the sustainability of these efforts, NRC could strengthen the implementation of its localisation strategy for the region. This would deepen the integration of local actors at different levels, better equipping them to take on greater leadership in project decision-making and consequently, long-term community support.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ NRC, "Technical Narrative: Emergency assistance and NFI support for vulnerable communities affected by displacement in the South-West and Northwest regions of Cameroon", 2020.

7. Conclusions

EFFICIENCY: Strong financial management, strategic local partnerships, and a level of flexibility in resource allocation during project implementation has enabled NRC to better adapt to some changing and unpredictable circumstances. However, minor administrative errors in budget drafting and grant applications, along with insufficient involvement of local partners in budget design and limited investment in building their capacity to meet NRC's procurement and reporting requirements, have led to delays and affected aspects of project efficiency.

EFFECTIVENESS: Overall, the project has contributed towards improving living conditions, dignity, and protection for concerned communities. Positive perceptions of NRC interventions among project participants highlight their effectiveness in addressing some of the communities most pressing needs in the NW and SW regions. For example, shelter and settlement support has enhanced living conditions for many, with high satisfaction rates concerning the quality of materials provided. Furthermore, the Food Assistance and MPCA initiatives have enhanced households' ability to invest in small businesses and improve agricultural outputs, contributing to addressing certain immediate and intermediate food needs, while also fostering their self-reliance. Legal assistance has also contributed to protection, specifically of displaced individuals, facilitating access to civil rights and dispute resolution. NRC's advocacy efforts for decentralising the NIC printing process will be crucial to continuing enhancing their protection and reducing their vulnerability to exploitation.

NRC's efforts to inclusivity and gender-sensitive programming has positively impacted community members, including men, women, boys, girls, and persons with disabilities. The project's evolving approach to community engagement reflects a dedication to increasingly placing participants at the centre of the humanitarian response. For instance, the transition from indirect involvement in earlier phases to more robust engagement strategies of local and national actors will foster local ownership and better collaboration. Moreover, while challenges such as communication barriers and varying awareness of community consultations exist, there are opportunities to enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in NRC's community engagement strategies through strengthening sensitisation and communication processes, as well as local engagement strategies. By fostering greater local participation throughout the full project cycle, the project outcomes can be further improved, ultimately strengthening the positive impact of NRC's initiatives.

Integrating complaints and feedback into NRC's M&E system has enabled the project to adapt to the certain changing needs of concerned communities. In this regard, the CFM has improved communication between NRC and project participants, fostering accountability and trust amongst the community. However, low awareness and accessibility related to the CFM among certain demographics, such as child-headed households, will need to be addressed to allow for a stronger inclusive and effective feedback mechanism. Moreover, while NRC's integrated approach to humanitarian assistance has been effective in meeting some of the pressing communities' needs, inconsistencies in service delivery across communities have hindered a fully holistic response. Although this integrated approach has the potential to deliver a more comprehensive response, the limited resources and pressing humanitarian needs in the NWSW regions call for a reassessment. In a conflict-affected setting, targeting fewer project participants can create tensions within communities and worsen the already fragile security situation. A more balanced strategy is therefore needed to effectively engage the optimal number of individuals served while also enhancing the overall effectiveness of the integrated response.

COHERENCE: Moreover, NRC's strategic coordination with national and local stakeholders, as well as humanitarian actors through different coordination forums has notably enhanced the overall humanitarian response's effectiveness. By leveraging local knowledge and ensuring a well-coordinated approach with other actors present in the region, NRC has

optimised resources and minimise duplication of efforts. Continued engagement with local and national actors will be important to foster a stronger representation and influence of these central stakeholders within humanitarian mechanisms and decision-making spaces, which will ultimately contribute to a more effective response. As NRC adapts its strategies to the evolving context, its commitment to localisation will be crucial for addressing the complex challenges faced by communities in these regions.

SUSTAINABILITY: Finally, NRC's immediate humanitarian services, as well as capacity-building efforts, and income-generating activities have laid a solid foundation for sustainable project outcomes. By combining short-term and medium-term solutions in WASH, Shelter, Food Assistance, and Protection/ICLA services, NRC has equipped communities to better manage their own development and enhance their self-reliance. However, challenges like political instability, context volatility and resource constraints require ongoing support and advocacy to protect these gains. Strengthening local partnerships and advancing localisation strategies will be essential for ensuring that the vulnerable situation in which some communities find themselves continue to improve after the project ends.

8. Recommendations

1. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1.1: Strengthen Localisation Strategy

To enhance NRC's localisation policy, local communities and partners should be more integrally involved in all stages of project design, not just during the initial phases or at certain points in the project implementation. This approach ensures that project objectives are better aligned with local needs and priorities, fostering stronger community ownership and more tangible sustainable interventions, as well as stronger trust and NRC's acceptance with the concerned community. In addition, at a coordination level, NRC should advocate for greater recognition of the leadership, presence, and influence of local and national actors (L/NAs) within HCIMA mechanisms. The NEAR monitoring framework highlights the necessary changes to advance localisation commitments, emphasising the importance of increased representation of L/NAs in key decision-making discussions, including Cluster meetings and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

Recommendation 1.2: Improve Contingency Planning in Project Design

Develop contingency plans that better take into account different levels of insecurity, as well as other context specificities, implementing adaptive measures specific to each situation. Strengthen the engagement with local partners during the development of these plans, for instance through conducting collaborative risk assessments and developing more collaborative adaptive measures tailored to each identified risk.

Recommendation 1.3: Enhance the Integrated Approach in Conflict Settings

While the integrated approach has the potential to provide a comprehensive response to humanitarian needs, the limited resources and urgent demands in the Northwest and Southwest regions necessitate a critical reassessment of targeting strategies for its implementation. In conflict-affected settings, prioritising a smaller number of project participants can lead to increased tensions within communities, further destabilising already fragile security conditions. Accordingly, NRC should continue focusing on equitable service delivery underpinned by solid context analysis. Strengthening collaboration with the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) could also amplify NRC's integrated approach. By exploring synergies with RRM, particularly in shared sectors like shelter, WASH, and protection, NRC could achieve greater impact through joint interventions and resource-sharing initiatives.

4. PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2.1: Enhance Accountability and Transparency in Communication

To enhance the accuracy and sensitivity of information gathering at the inception phase, NRC should consider implementing individual interviews for people in extremely vulnerable conditions rather than relying solely on group discussions. This could create a more comfortable environment for participants, allowing them to share their experiences and needs openly without fear of stigma from other members of their communities. This would further strengthen the response, aligning it better to the real needs of communities.

This evaluation highlights the need for increased transparency around the profiling and verification of project participants. NRC should navigate these processes while upholding humanitarian principles. Clearer and stronger communication strategies regarding project objectives, selection criteria for recipients, and implementation strategies should be developed since the inception of the project and throughout the project cycle, tailoring to the

different phases of the project. This would enhance trust in volatile settings, as well as reduce frustration and any potential tensions caused amongst community members when implementing the response's services. Strengthen the Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) process by involving communities in collective reflections on project outcomes and lessons learned at the end will be crucial to enhance accountability, trust, and continuing strengthening acceptance of NRC within these communities.

Recommendation 2.2: Streamline Gender and Disability-Inclusive Programming

NRC should maintain and expand gender-sensitive programming by ensuring equal participation of women in decision-making processes and promoting their safety through gender-segregated facilities. Additionally, develop more targeted interventions for persons living with disabilities (LwD) by providing specific support and tailored information to ensure inclusivity in all programming. Targeting strategies should be redefined to enhance the inclusion of vulnerable communities. This may involve conducting targeted evaluations or needs assessments to identify the specific requirements of people LwD.

Recommendation 2.3: Strengthen Partnerships

To improve NRC's cluster coordination and overall effectiveness in humanitarian response, NRC should address existing gaps in staff participation in cluster meetings, hindered by competing responsibilities associated to their roles. Allocating dedicated personnel for coordination tasks could enhance NRC's presence in these spaces and ensure consistent participation.

5. OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3.1: Enhance Efficiency and Partner's Collaboration

NRC should continue balancing humanitarian assistance with capacity building efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency responses and a medium and longer term. Internally, additionally, NRC should provide continuous support to implementing partners, particularly in administrative, reporting, and procurement processes. In this regard, more comprehensive training on procurement procedures, focusing on quality operational training would be beneficial to local partners. Conduct regular working sessions to address potential challenges throughout the project cycle to address any administrative or operational challenge should be integrated into the project cycle, with a focus on promoting joint problem-solving strategies and responses.

In addition, NRC should allocate sufficient time from the project design stage for administrative, reporting, and financial procedures to avoid bureaucratic delays. This would reduce the pressure on field teams, by better reflecting the workload realities on-the-ground related to the implementation of these types of projects, as well as the subsequent NRC's reporting and processes. In this regard, strengthening communication with NRC's partners from the design phase is also essential, including clarifying reporting and operational standards.

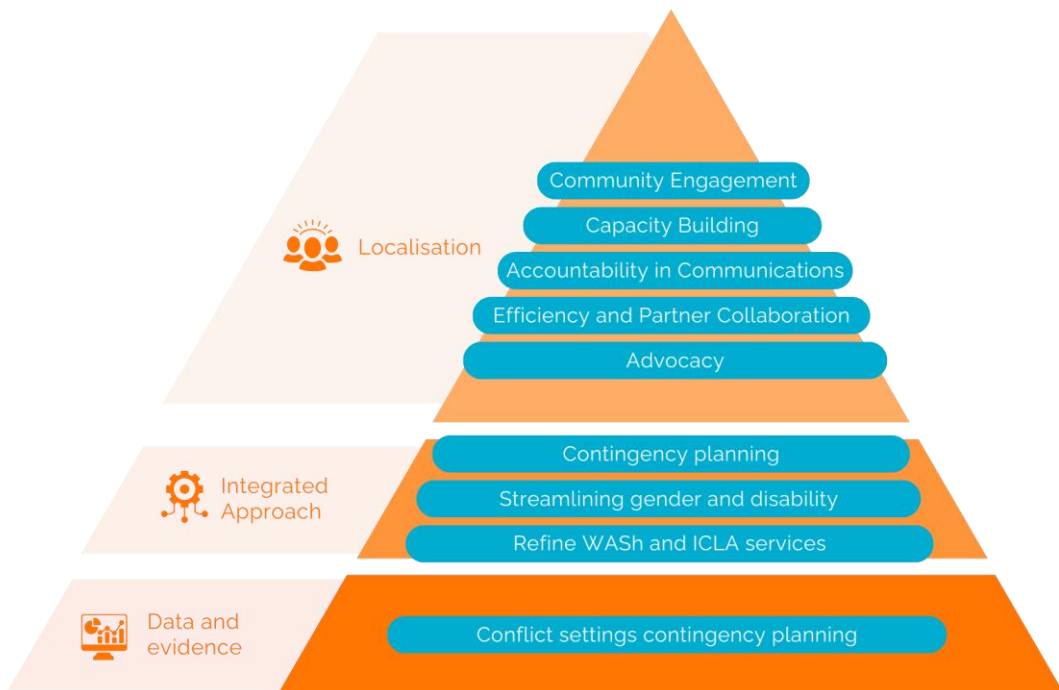
Recommendation 3.2: Refine WASH and Protection/ICLA Services

- **WASH:** Review hygiene promotion activities to address gaps in knowledge among project participants. Expand hygiene education, particularly around critical handwashing practices, to improve disease prevention. Increase the number of water points and latrines, especially in underserved areas, to continue meeting community needs. In addition, improving the infrastructure of WASH facilities, including latrines, along with enhanced advocacy through WASH Committees and community engagement, can help raise awareness about the importance of preserving latrines

and WASH infrastructure. This approach can help reduce misuse of NRC-installed infrastructure and improve overall comfort for individuals.

- **Protection/ICLA:** NRC should pursue greater advocacy efforts early in the project cycle to resolve bottlenecks. This includes working more closely with relevant government bodies at an earlier stage to explore more decentralised solutions and reduced delays in the production of Legal Civil Documentation (LCD) – such as birth certificates, as well as HLP disputes, through ensuring adequate due diligence and conflict analysis when supporting tenure security processes will be key.

The visual below provides a snapshot of key areas for recommendations:





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